

# THE ROAD TO ELEUSIS

## Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries

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FOREWORD by R. Gordon Wasson.....	I
I. THE WASSON ROAD TO ELEUSIS (R.G.W.) .....	2
II. A CHALLENGING QUESTION AND MY ANSWER (A.H.) .....	8
III. SOLVING THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERY (C.A.P.R.) .....	12
IV. ANCILLARY DATA .....	19
V. THE HOMERIC HYMN TO DEMETER.....	23
VI. DOCUMENTS (C.A.P.R.)	

(Chapter V included in alternate translation from the Loeb Edition. Chapter VI not included.)

# FOREWORD

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So much has been written about the Eleusinian Mysteries and for so long a time that a word is needed to justify this presentation of three papers dealing with them. For close to 2,000 years the Mystery was performed every year (except one) for carefully screened initiates in our month of September. Everyone speaking the Greek language was free to present himself, except only those who had the unexpiated blood of a murdered man on their hands. The initiates lived through the night in the telesterion of Eleusis, under the leadership of the two hierophantic families, the Eumolpids and the Kerykes, and they would come away all wonderstruck by what they had lived through: according to some, they were never the same as before. The testimony about that night of awe-inspiring experience is unanimous and Sophocles speaks for the initiates when he says:

Thrice happy are those of mortals, who having seen those rites depart for Hades; for to them alone is granted to have a true life there. For the rest, all there is evil.

Yet up to now no one has known what justifies utterances such as this, and there are many like it. Here lies for us the mystery of the Eleusinian Mysteries. To this mystery we three have applied ourselves and believe we have found the solution, close to 2,000 years after the last performance of the rite and some 4,000 years since the first.

The first three chapters of this book were read by the respective authors as papers before the Second International Conference on Hallucinogenic Mushrooms held on the Olympic Peninsula, Washington, on Friday, 28 October 1977.

R.G.W.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE WASSON ROAD TO ELEUSIS

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With this little book we begin a new chapter in the history of the fifty-year-old discipline of ethnomycoLOGY, a chapter that for the first time takes within its purview, and in a big way, our own cultural past, our legacy from ancient Greece. EthnomycoLOGY is simply the study of the role of mushrooms, in the broadest sense, in the past of the human race; and it is a branch of ethnobotany.

The English language lacks a word to designate the higher fungi. "Toadstool" is an epithet, a pejorative designation embracing all those fungal growths that the user distrusts, whether rightly or wrongly. "Mushroom" is ambiguous, covering different areas of the fungal world for different persons. In this little book we will use "mushroom" for all the higher fungi. Now that at long last the world is coming to know these fungal growths in all their myriad shapes and colors and smells and textures, perhaps this novel usage will answer to a need and come to be generally accepted.

We are three who have enlisted for this presentation. Dr. Albert Hofmann is the Swiss chemist renowned for his discovery in 1943 of LSD, but his familiarity with the plant alkaloids is encyclopedic and he will draw our attention to attributes of some of them relevant to the Eleusinian Mysteries.

As we are dealing with a central theme of Greek civilization in antiquity, it was obvious that we needed the cooperation of a Greek scholar. At the appropriate moment I learned of Professor Carl A. P. Ruck, of Boston University, who for some years has been making notable discoveries in the recalcitrant area of Greek ethnobotany. For many months we three have been studying the proposal that we are making and his paper will be the third and concluding one. The *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* is the source for the myth that underlies Eleusis and we offer a new English rendering of it by Danny Staples.

It will be my function, in this first of three papers, to stress certain attributes of the cult of inebriating mushrooms in Mexico.

Early Man in Greece, in the second millennium before Christ, founded the Mysteries of Eleusis and they held spellbound the initiates who each year attended the rite. Silence as to what took place there was obligatory: the laws of Athens were extreme in the penalties that were imposed on any who in-

fringed the secret, but throughout the Greek world, far beyond the reach of Athens' laws, the secret was kept spontaneously throughout Antiquity, and since the suspension of the Mysteries in the 4th century A.D. that Secret has become a built-in element in the lore of Ancient Greece. I would not be surprised if some classical scholars would even feel that we are guilty of a sacrilegious outrage at now prying open the secret. On 15 November 1956 I read a brief paper before the American Philosophical Society describing the Mexican mushroom cult and in the ensuing oral discussion I intimated that this cult might lead us to the solution of the Eleusinian Mysteries. A famous English archaeologist specializing in the archaeology of Greece, with whom I had had the friendliest relations for about thirty-five years, wrote me in a letter a little later the following:

I do not think that Mycenae had anything to do with the divine mushroom or the Eleusinian mysteries either. May I add a word of warning? Stick to your Mexican mushroom cult and beware of seeing mushrooms everywhere. We much enjoyed your Philadelphia paper and would recommend you keep as close to that as you can. Forgive the frankness of an old friend.

I am sorry that he has now joined the shades in Hades, or perhaps I should be happy that he will not be pained by my brashness in disregarding his well-meant advice.

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My late wife Valentina Pavlovna and I were the first to use the term ethnomycoLOGY and we have been closely identified with the progress in this discipline over the past fifty years. That the reader may sense the drama of this our latest discovery I will begin by retelling the story of our mushroomic adventure. It covers precisely the last fifty years. It constitutes in large measure the autobiography of the Wasson family, and it has now led us directly to Eleusis.

Late in August 1927 my bride, as she then was, and I took our delayed honeymoon in the chalet lent to us by the publisher Adam Dingwall at Big Indian in the Catskills. She was a Russian born in Moscow of a family of the intelligentsia. Tina had

fled from Russia with her family in the summer of 1918, she being then 17 years old. She qualified as a physician at the University of London and had been working hard to establish her pediatric practice in New York. I was a newspaper man in the financial department of the *Herald Tribune*. On that first beautiful afternoon of our holiday in the Catskills, we went sauntering down the path for a walk, hand in hand, happy as larks, both of us abounding in the joy of life. There was a clearing on the right, a mountain forest on our left.

Suddenly Tina threw down my hand and darted up into the forest. She had seen mushrooms, a host of mushrooms, mushrooms of many kinds that peopled the forest floor. She cried out in delight at their beauty. She addressed each kind with an affectionate Russian name. Such a display she had not seen since she left her family's *dacha* near Moscow, almost a decade before. She knelt before those toadstools in poses of adoration like the Virgin hearkening to the Angel of the Annunciation. She began gathering some of the fungi in her apron. I called to her: "Come back, come back to me! They are poisonous, putrid. They are toadstools. Come back to me!" She only laughed the more: her merry laughter will ring forever in my ears. That evening she seasoned the soup with the fungi, she garnished the meat with other fungi. Yet others she threaded together and strung up to dry, for winter use as she said. My discomfiture was complete. That night I ate nothing with mushrooms in it. Frantic and deeply hurt, I was led to wild ideas: I told her that I would wake up a widower.

She proved right and I wrong.

The particular circumstances of this episode seem to have shaped the course of our lives. We began checking with our compatriots, she with Russians and I with Anglo-Saxons. We quickly found that our individual attitudes characterized our respective peoples. Then we began gathering information, at first slowly, haphazardly, intermittently. We assembled our respective vocabularies for mushrooms: the Russian was endless, never to this day exhausted; the English, essentially confined to three words, two of them ill-defined—toadstool, mushroom, fungus. The Russian poets and novelists filled their writings with mushrooms, always in a loving context. It would seem to a stranger that every Russian poet composes verses on mushroom-gathering almost as a rite of passage to qualify for mature rating! In English the silence of many writers about mushrooms is deafening: Chaucer and Milton never mention them, the others seldom. For Shakespeare, Spenser, William Penn, Laurence Sterne (exten-

sively), Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, for Edgar Allan Poe and D. H. Lawrence and Emily Dickinson, "mushroom" and "toadstool" are unpleasant, even disgusting epithets. Our poets when they do mention them link them to decay and death. We began to cast our net wider and to study all the peoples of Europe, not only the German and French and Italians, but more especially the peripheral cultures, out of the main stream, where archaic forms and beliefs survive longest—the Albanian, Frisian, Lappish, Basque, Catalonian and Sardinian, Icelandic and Faroese, and of course the Hungarian and the Finnish. In all our inquiries and travels we looked, not to the erudite, but to the humble and illiterate peasants as our most cherished informants. We explored their knowledge of mushrooms and the uses to which they put them. We were careful also to take the flavor of the scabrous and erotic vocabularies often neglected by lexicographers. We examined the common names for mushrooms in all these cultures, seeking the fossil metaphors hiding in their etymologies, to discover what those metaphors expressed, whether a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward our earthy creatures.

A little thing, some of you may say, this difference in emotional attitude toward wild mushrooms. But my wife and I did not think so, and we devoted most of our leisure hours for decades to dissecting it, defining it, and tracing it to its origin. Such discoveries as we have made, including the rediscovery of the religious role for the hallucinogenic mushrooms of Mexico, can be laid to our preoccupation with that cultural rift between my wife and me, between our respective peoples, between the mycophilia and mycophobia (words that we devised for our two attitudes) that divide the Indo-European peoples into two camps. If this hypothesis of ours be wrong, then it must have been a singular false hypothesis to have borne the fruit that it has. But it is /not wrong. Thanks to the immense strides made in the study of the human psyche in this century, we are all now aware that deep-seated emotional attitudes acquired in early life are of profound importance. I suggest that when such traits betoken the attitudes of whole tribes or peoples, when those traits have remained unaltered throughout recorded history, and especially when they differ from one people to another neighboring people, then you are face to face with a phenomenon of deepest cultural implications, whose primal cause is to be discovered only in the well-springs of cultural history.

Our card files and correspondence kept expanding and in the end, sometime in the early 1940's, we sat down, Tina and I, and asked ourselves

what we were going to do with all our data. We decided to write a book, but there were so many lacunae in our evidence that it would be years before we could put words to paper. In our conversations at that time we found that we had been thinking along the same lines, afraid to express our thoughts even to each other: they were too fantastic. We had both come to discern a period long long ago, long before our ancestors knew how to write, when those ancestors must have regarded a mushroom as a divinity or quasi-divinity. We knew not which mushroom(s) nor why. In the days of Early Man his whole world was shot through with religious feeling and the unseen powers held him in thrall. Our sacred "mushroom" must have been wondrous indeed, evoking awe and adoration, fear, yes, even terror. When that early cult gave way to new religions and to novel ways emerging with a literate culture, the emotions aroused by the old cult would survive, truncated from their roots. In one area the fear and terror would live on, either of a particular mushroom (as in the case of *A. muscaria*); or else, as the emotional focus through tabu became vague, of "toadstools" in general; and in another area, for a reason that we cannot now tell, it was the spirit of love and adoration that survived. Here would lie the explanation of the mycophobia vs. mycophilia that we had discovered. ("Toadstool", incidentally, was originally the specific name of *A. muscaria*, the divine mushroom, of a beauty befitting its divinity. Through tabu, "toadstool" lost its focus and came to hover over the whole of the mushroom tribe that the mycophage shuns.)

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It was in Mexico that our pursuit of a hypothetical sacred mushroom first achieved its goal. On 19 September 1952 we received in the post two letters from Europe: one from Robert Graves enclosing a cutting from a pharmaceutical journal in which there were quotations from Richard Evans Schultes, who in turn cited a number of 16th century Spanish friars telling of a strange mushroom cult among the Indians of Mesoamerica; the second from Giovanni Mardersteig, our printer in Verona, sending us his sketch of a curious archaeological artifact from Mesoamerica. It was exhibited in the Rietberg Museum of Zurich. The artifact was of stone, about a foot high, obviously a mushroom, with a radiant being carved on the stem or what mycologists call the stipe. Here was perhaps the very cult we were seeking, well within our reach. Earlier we had resolved that we would avoid the New World and

Africa in our inquiries: the world was too large and our hands were full with Eurasia. But in a trice we changed our minds and the course of our studies, and we concentrated on Mexico and Guatemala. We had been postulating a wild mushroom as a focus of religious devotion, a fantastic surmise. Now here it was on our doorstep. All that winter we went racing through the texts of the 16th century Spanish friars, and what extraordinary narratives they give us! We flew down to Mexico in that summer of 1953 and for many rainy seasons thereafter. With wonderful cooperation from everyone in that country, on the night of 29–30 June 1955 we finally made our breakthrough: my photographer and friend Allan Richardson and I participated with our Indian friends in a midnight *agape* conducted by a shaman of extraordinary quality. This was the first time on record that anyone of the alien race had shared in such a communion. It was a soul-shattering experience. The wild surmise that we had dared to postulate in a whisper to each other years before was at last vindicated. And now, nearly a quarter of a century later, we are prepared to offer another mushroom, *Claviceps purpurea*, as holding the secret to the Eleusinian Mysteries.

That there might be a common denominator between the Mexican mushroom Mystery and the Mystery of Eleusis had struck me at once. They both aroused an overwhelming sense of awe, of wonder. I will leave to Professor Ruck the discussion of Eleusis but will quote one ancient author, Aristides the Rhetor, who in the 2nd century A.D. pulled aside the curtain for an instant when he said that what the initiate experienced was "new, astonishing, inaccessible to rational cognition", and he went on:

Eleusis is a shrine common to the whole earth, and of all the divine things that exist among men, it is both the most awesome and the most luminous. At what place in the world have more miraculous tidings been sung, and where have the dromena called forth greater emotion, *where has there been greater rivalry between seeing and hearing?* [Italics mine.]

And he goes on to speak of the "ineffable visions" that it had been the privilege of many generations of fortunate men and women to behold.

This description point by point tallies with the effect on the initiate of the Mesoamerican mushroom rite, even to the "rivalry" between seeing and hearing. For the sights that one sees assume rhythmical contours, and the singing of the shaman seems to take on visible and colorful shapes.

There seems to have been a saying among the Greeks that mushrooms were the “food of the Gods”, *broma theon*, and Porphyrius is quoted as having called them “nurslings of the Gods”, *theotrophos*. The Greeks of the classic period were mycophobes. Was this not because their ancestors had felt that the whole fungal tribe was infected “by attraction” with the holiness of the sacred mushroom, and that mushrooms were therefore to be avoided by mortal men? Are we not dealing with what was in origin a religious tabu?

I would not be understood as contending that only these alkaloids (wherever found in nature) bring about visions and ecstasy. Clearly some poets and prophets and many mystics and ascetics seem to have enjoyed ecstatic visions that answer the requirements of the ancient Mysteries and that duplicate the mushroom agape of Mexico. I do not suggest that St. John of Patmos ate mushrooms in order to write the Book of the Revelation. Yet the succession of images in his Vision, so clearly seen but such a phantasmagoria, means for me that he was in the same state as one bemushroomed. Nor do I suggest for a moment that William Blake knew the mushroom when he wrote this telling account of the clarity of “vision”:

The Prophets describe what they saw in Vision as real and existing men, whom they saw with their imaginative and immortal organs; the Apostles the same; the clearer the organ the more distinct the object. *A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour, or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light than his perishing eye can see, does not imagine at all.* [Italics mine. From The Writings of William Blake, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes, vol. III, p. 108]

This must sound cryptic to one who does not share Blake’s vision or who has not taken the mushroom. The advantage of the mushroom is that it puts many, if not everyone, within reach of this state without having to suffer the mortifications of Blake and St. John. It permits you to see, more clearly than our perishing mortal eye can see, vistas beyond the horizons of this life, to travel backwards and forwards in time, to enter other planes of existence, even (as the Indians say) to know God. It is hardly surprising that your emotions are profoundly affected, and you feel that an indissoluble bond unites you with the others who have shared with you in the sacred agape. All that you see during this night

has a pristine quality: the landscape, the edifices, the carvings, the animals—they look as though they had come straight from the Maker’s workshop. This newness of everything—it is as though the world had just dawned—overwhelms you and melts you with its beauty. Not unnaturally, what is happening to you seems to you freighted with significance, beside which the humdrum events of everyday are trivial. All these things you see with an immediacy of vision that leads you to say to yourself, “Now I am seeing for the first time, seeing direct, without the intervention of mortal eyes.”

Plato tells us that beyond this ephemeral and imperfect existence here below, there is another Ideal world of Archetypes, where the original, the true, the beautiful Pattern of things exists for evermore. Poets and philosophers for millennia have pondered and discussed his conception. It is clear to me where Plato found his “Ideas”; it was clear to those who were initiated into the Mysteries among his contemporaries too. Plato had drunk of the potion in the Temple of Eleusis and had spent the night seeing the great Vision.

And all the time that you are seeing these things, the priestess in Mexico sings, not loud, but with authority. The Indians are notoriously not given to displays of inner feelings—except on these occasions. The singing is good, but under the influence of the mushroom you think it is infinitely tender and sweet. It is as though you were hearing it with your mind’s ear, purged of all dross. You are lying on a *petate* or mat; perhaps, if you have been wise, on an air mattress and in a sleeping bag. It is dark, for all lights have been extinguished save a few embers among the stones on the floor and the incense in a sherd. It is still, for the thatched hut is apt to be some distance away from the village. In the darkness and stillness, that voice hovers through the hut, coming now from beyond your feet, now at your very ear, now distant, now actually underneath you, with strange ventriloquistic effect. The mushrooms produce this illusion also. Everyone experiences it, just as do the tribesmen of Siberia who have eaten of *Amanita muscaria* and lie under the spell of their shamans, displaying as these do their astonishing dexterity with ventriloquistic drum beats. Likewise, in Mexico, I have heard a shaman engage in a most complicated percussive beat: with her hands she hits her chest, her thighs, her forehead, her arms, each giving a different resonance, keeping a complicated rhythm and modulating, even syncopating, the strokes. Your body lies in the darkness, heavy as lead, but your spirit seems to soar and leave the hut, and with the speed of thought to travel where it

listeth, in time and space, accompanied by the shaman's singing and by the ejaculations of her percussive chant. What you are seeing and what you are hearing appear as one: the music assumes harmonious shapes, giving visual form to its harmonies, and what you are seeing takes on the modalities of music—the music of the spheres. "Where has there been greater rivalry between seeing and hearing?" How apposite to the Mexican experience was the ancient Greek's rhetorical question! All your senses are similarly affected: the cigarette with which you occasionally break the tension of the night smells as no cigarette before had ever smelled; the glass of simple water is infinitely better than champagne. Elsewhere I once wrote that the bemushroomed person is poised in space, a disembodied eye, invisible, incorporeal, seeing but not seen. In truth, he is the five senses disembodied, all of them keyed to the height of sensitivity and awareness, all of them blending into one another most strangely, until the person, utterly passive, becomes a pure receptor, infinitely delicate, of sensations.

As your body lies there in its sleeping bag, your soul is free, loses all sense of time, alert as it never was before, living an eternity in a night, seeing infinity in a grain of sand. What you have seen and heard is cut as with a burin in your memory, never to be effaced. At last you know what the ineffable is, and what ecstasy means. Ecstasy! The mind harks back to the origin of that word. For the Greeks *ekstasis* meant the flight of the soul from the body. I am certain that this word came into being to describe the effect of the Mystery of Eleusis. Can you find a better word than that to describe the bemushroomed state? In common parlance, among the many who have not experienced ecstasy, ecstasy is fun, and I am frequently asked why I do not reach for mushrooms every night. But ecstasy is not fun. Your very soul is seized and shaken until it tingles. After all, who will choose to feel undiluted awe, or to float through that door yonder into the Divine Presence? The unknowing vulgar abuse the word, and we must recapture its full and terrifying sense.... A few hours later, the next morning, you are fit to go to work. But how unimportant work seems to you, by comparison with the portentous happenings of that night! If you can, you prefer to stay close to the house, and, with those who lived through that night, compare notes, and utter ejaculations of amazement.

I will convey to you the overwhelming impression of awe that the sacred mushrooms arouse in the native population of the Mexican highlands. In the Mazatec tribe where I ingested them for the first

time these particular mushrooms are not "mushrooms": they stand apart. One word—*thain<sub>3</sub>*—embraces the whole fungal tribe, edible, innocuous but inedible, and toxic,—the whole fungal world except the sacred species. The sacred species are known by a name that in itself is a euphemism for some other name now lost: they are *nti<sub>1</sub>xi<sub>3</sub>tho<sub>3</sub>*. (In Mazatec each syllable must be pronounced in one of four tones or in slides from one tone to another, <sub>1</sub> being the highest. The initial *7* is a glottal stop.) The first element, *nti<sub>1</sub>*, is a diminutive of affection and respect. The second element, *xi<sub>3</sub>tho<sub>3</sub>*, means "that which leaps forth". The whole word is thus: "the dear little things that leap forth". But this word is holy: you do not hear it uttered in the market place or where numbers of people are assembled. It is best to bring up the subject at night, by the light of a fire or a *vela* (votive candle), when you are alone with your hosts. Then they will dilate endlessly on the wonders of these wondrous mushrooms. For this euphemistic name they will probably use yet others, a further degree of euphemism, the *santitos*, the "little saints", or again the "little things" in Mazatec. When we were leaving the Mazatec mountains on horseback after our first visit there, we asked our muleteer Victor Hernandez how it came about that the sacred mushrooms were called "the dear little ones that leap forth". He had traveled the mountain trails all his life and spoke Spanish although he could neither read nor write nor even tell time by the clock's face. His answer, breathtaking in sincerity and feeling, breathed the poetry of religion and I quote it word for word as he uttered it and as I put it down in my notebook at the time:

El honguillo viene por si mismo, no se sabe de donde, como el viento que viene sin saber de donde ni porque. [The little mushroom comes of itself, no one knows whence, like the wind that comes we know not whence nor why.]

Victor was referring to the genesis of the sacred mushrooms: they leap forth seedless and rootless, a mystery from the beginning. Aurelio Carreras, town slaughterer in Huautla, when we asked him where the mushrooms take you, said simply: *Le llevan alli donde dios esta*, "They carry you there where God is". According to Ricardo Garcia Gonzalez of Rio Santiago, "To eat the mushrooms you must be clean: they are the blood of our Lord the Eternal Father." *Hay que ser muy limpio, es la sangre de Nuestro Señor Padre Eterno*. These are Spanish-speaking villagers picked at random. They express religion in its purest essence, without intellectual

content. Aristotle said of the Eleusinian Mysteries precisely the same: the initiates were to suffer, to feel, to experience certain impressions and moods. They were not to learn anything.

As man emerged from his brutish past, thousands of years ago, there was a stage in the evolution of his awareness when the discovery of a mushroom (or was it a higher plant?) with miraculous properties was a revelation to him, a veritable detonator to his soul, arousing in him sentiments of awe and reverence, and gentleness and love, to the highest pitch of which mankind is capable, all those sentiments and virtues that mankind has ever since regarded as the highest attribute of his kind. It made him see what this perishing mortal eye cannot see. How right the Greeks were to hedge about this Mystery, this imbibing of the potion, with secrecy and surveillance! What today is resolved into a mere drug, a tryptamine or lysergic acid derivative, was for him a prodigious miracle, inspiring in him poetry and philosophy and religion. Perhaps with all our modern knowledge we do not need the divine mushrooms any more. Or do we need them more than ever? Some are shocked that the key even to religion might be reduced to a mere drug. On the other hand, the drug is as mysterious as it ever was: "like the wind that comes we know not whence nor why." Out of a mere drug comes the ineffable, comes ecstasy. It is not the only instance in the history of humankind where the lowly has given birth to the divine. Altering a sacred text, we would say that this paradox is a hard saying, yet one worthy of all men to be believed.

If our classical scholars were given the opportunity to attend the rite at Eleusis, to talk with the priestess, what would they not exchange for that chance? They would approach the precincts, enter the hallowed chamber, with the reverence born of the texts venerated by scholars for millennia. How propitious would their frame of mind be, if they were invited to partake of the potion! Well, those rites take place now, unbeknownst to the classical scholars, in scattered dwellings, humble, thatched, without windows, far from the beaten track, high in the mountains of Mexico, in the stillness of the night, broken only by the distant barking of a dog or the braying of an ass. Or, since we are in the rainy season, perhaps the Mystery is accompanied by torrential rains and punctuated by terrifying thunderbolts. Then, indeed, as you lie there bemushroomed, listening to the music and seeing the visions, you know a soul-shattering experience, recalling as you do the belief of some early peoples that mushrooms, the sacred mushrooms, are di-

vinely engendered by Parjanya, the Aryan God of the Lightning-bolt, in the Soft Mother Earth.

Someone has called mycology the step-child of the sciences. Is it not now acquiring a wholly new and unexpected dimension? Religion has always been at the core of man's highest faculties and cultural achievements, and therefore I ask you now to contemplate our lowly mushroom—what patents of ancient lineage and nobility are coming its way!

R. GORDON WASSON

## CHAPTER TWO

# A CHALLENGING QUESTION AND MY ANSWER

In July 1975 I was visiting my friend Gordon Was-  
son in his home in Danbury when he suddenly  
asked me this question: whether Early Man in an-  
cient Greece could have hit on a method to isolate  
an hallucinogen from ergot that would have given  
him an experience comparable to LSD or psilocybin.  
I replied that this might well have been the case and  
I promised to send him, after further reflection, an  
exposition of our present knowledge on the subject,  
which I already suspected would support my tenta-  
tive position. Two years have passed, and here now  
is my answer.

Ergot is the English name for a fungal growth,  
the “sclerotium” of a mushroom known to mycolo-  
gists as *Claviceps purpurea* (Fr.) Tul. It is a parasite  
on rye and other cereals such as barley or wheat, and  
also on certain wild grasses. Other species of the  
genus *Claviceps*, *viz.* *C. paspali* Stev. and Hall, *C. nigricans* Tul., and *C. glabra* Langdon, etc., are  
parasitical to many species and varieties of grasses.  
Ergot itself is not of uniform chemical composition:  
it occurs in “biological” or “chemical” races, differ-  
ing from each other mainly by the composition of  
their alkaloidal constituents. (Chemists define “al-  
kaloids” as nitrogen-containing alkaline substances  
that represent the pharmacologically active prin-  
ciples of many plants.) Thus in Switzerland there exist  
three varieties of ergot of rye: (a) in the Midlands a  
race containing mainly the alkaloid ergotamine, (b)  
in the Valais one with alkaloids of the ergotoxine  
group, and (c) in the Grisons a variety with no al-  
kaloids at all. Furthermore in other kinds of er-  
got—growing on wheat, on barley, on millet, on  
*loliuum*, etc.—there are wide variations in alkaloidal  
makeup, sometimes depending on geographical lo-  
cation.

By far the most important of all kinds of ergot is  
ergot of rye, purple-brown protrusions from the ears  
of rye. Ergot of rye (in scientific nomenclature: *Se-  
cale cornutum*) has been called in England “horned  
rye”, “spiked rye”, “spurred rye”, but most com-  
monly “ergot of rye”, a translation of the French  
*ergot de seigle*. The word ergot is defined in the Petit  
Larousse as “*petit ongle pointu derriere le pied du  
coq*”, “small pointed talon behind the cock’s foot”,  
but the derivation of the French word *ergot* is un-  
certain. Other French names are *blé cornu*, *seigle  
ergoté*, *seigle ivre*. In German there seem to be more

variants than in other languages: *Mutterkorn*, *Rock-  
enmutter*, *Afterkorn*, *Todtenkorn*, *Tollkorn*, and many  
others. In German folklore there was a belief that,  
when the corn waved in the wind, the corn mother  
(a demon) was passing through the field; her chil-  
dren were the rye wolves (ergot). In our context we  
observe that of these names, two, *seigle ivre*  
 (“drunken rye”) and *Tollkorn* (“mad grain”), point  
to a knowledge of the psychotropic effects of ergot.  
This folk awareness of the mind changing effects of  
ergot shows an intimate knowledge of its properties,  
at least among herbalists, deeply rooted in European  
traditions.

Ergot of rye has a storied past. Once a dreaded  
poison, it has become a rich treasure chamber of  
valuable pharmaceuticals.

In the Middle Ages bizarre epidemics occurred  
in Europe costing thousands of people their lives,  
occasioned by bread made from rye contaminated  
with ergot. These epidemics took two forms, *Ergot-  
ismus convulsivus*, characterized by nervous convul-  
sive and epileptiform symptoms, and *Ergotismus  
gangraenosus*, in which gangrenous manifestations  
leading to mummification of the extremities were a  
prominent feature. Ergotism was also known as *ignis  
sacer* (“holy fire”), or “St. Anthony’s fire”, because  
St. Anthony was the patron saint of a religious order  
founded to care for the victims of ergotism. The  
cause of these epidemics—bread contaminated with  
ergot—was not learned until the seventeenth cen-  
tury, and since then there have been only sporadic  
outbreaks of ergot poisoning.

Ergot was first mentioned as a remedy by the  
German physician Adam Lonitzer in 1582. He said it  
was being used by midwives to precipitate child-  
birth. The first scientific report on the use of ergot  
as a uterotonic agent was presented by the American  
physician John Stearns in 1808: “Account of the  
*pulvis parturiens*”. But already in 1824 Dr. David  
Hosack, also American, recognizing the dangers of  
using ergot for accelerating childbirth, recom-  
mended that the drug be used only to control post-  
partum haemorrhage. Since then ergot has been

used in obstetrics mainly for this purpose.<sup>1</sup> (This Dr. Hosack was a distinguished man. He was a physician to many of the eminent New Yorkers of his time, and he accompanied Alexander Hamilton to Weehawken heights for his fatal duel with Aaron Burr. This I learned from the admirable life of Hosack by Christine Robbins.)

The latest and most important chapter in the history of ergot deals with it as a rich source of pharmacologically useful alkaloids.<sup>2</sup> More than thirty alkaloids have been isolated from ergot and it is unlikely that many new ones will be discovered. Hundreds of chemical modifications of these natural alkaloids have been prepared and investigated pharmacologically. Today all these alkaloids are also available by total synthesis.

Medicinally the most useful alkaloids stem from ergot of rye. The first ergot alkaloid that found widespread therapeutic use was ergotamine, isolated by A. Stoll in 1918. It is the essential component of pharmaceutical preparations such as "Cafergot" and "Bellergal", medicaments against migraine and nervous disorders. Modern valuable ergot preparations are "Hydergine" developed by A. Stoll and A. Hofmann in the Sandoz laboratories in Basel, containing hydrogenated ergotoxine alkaloids, used in the treatment of geriatric disorders, and "Dihydroergot" with dihydroergotamine as active component, for the therapy of circulatory disturbances.

Of special relevance to our problem here are the investigations into the alkaloid ergonovine, which is the specific uterotonic water-soluble principle of ergot. In 1932 H. W. Dudley and C. Moir in England discovered that water-soluble extracts of ergot, containing none of the water-insoluble alkaloids of the ergotamine-ergotoxine type, elicited strong uterotonic activity. This observation led three years later to the isolation of the alkaloid responsible for this action simultaneously in four separate laboratories, which named it "ergometrine", "ergobasin", "ergotocine," "ergostetrine", respectively. The International Pharmacopoeia Commission proposed a name to be internationally accepted to replace these synonyms, *viz.* "ergonovine".

<sup>1</sup> The standard monograph on the botany and history of ergot is G. Barger: *Ergot and Ergotism*, Gurney and Jackson, London, 1931.

<sup>2</sup> The results of the chemical, pharmacological, and medicinal investigations on ergot alkaloids carried out in laboratories all over the world are reviewed in the monograph by A. Hofmann: *Die Mutterkornalkaloide*, F. Enke Verlag, Stuttgart, 1964.

In 1937, starting with naturally occurring lysergic acid, I prepared ergonovine, which by its chemical composition is lysergic acid propanolamide. Lysergic acid is the nucleus common to most ergot alkaloids. It is extracted from special cultures of ergot and could also be prepared today by total synthesis if this procedure were not too expensive. I used the method developed for the synthesis of ergonovine for the preparation of many chemical modifications of ergonovine. One of these partly synthetic derivatives of ergonovine was lysergic acid butanolamide. This is used today in obstetrics, replacing to a major extent ergonovine, under the brand name "Methergine" to stop postpartum haemorrhage.

Another lysergic acid derivative that I synthesized in this context aiming to get an analeptic (that is, an agent with circulation and respiration stimulating properties) was lysergic acid diethylamide. Pharmacological examination revealed a fairly strong uterotonic activity in this compound, nearly as strong as ergonovine. In 1943 I discovered in self-experiments the specific high hallucinogenic potency of lysergic acid diethylamide, which became known worldwide under the laboratory code name LSD-25.

My interest in hallucinogenic agents, originating in 1943 from my work with LSD, brought me into personal contact with Gordon Wasson, pioneer ethnobotanist and also pioneer in the investigation of the ancient Mexican mushroom cult. From Roger Heim, then head of the Laboratoire de Cryptogamie and Director of the famous Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle of Paris, whom Wasson invited to study and identify in the field his sacred mushrooms, I received samples of them for chemical analysis. With my laboratory assistant Hans Tscherter I succeeded in isolating the hallucinogenic principles of the sacred Mexican mushrooms, which I named psilocybin and psilocin. With my colleagues of the Sandoz Research Laboratories, we succeeded in the elucidation of the chemical structure and the synthesis of psilocybin and psilocin.

Inspired by my talks with my friend Wasson and encouraged by our success with the hallucinogenic mushrooms, I decided to tackle also the problem of another psychotropic Mexican plant, *ololiuhqui*. With Wasson's help I obtained a large quantity of authentic *ololiuhqui* seeds of the two morning glories that the Mesoamerican Indians were using, seeds of *Turbina corymbosa* (L.) Raf. and *Ipomoea violacea* L. When we analyzed them we arrived at an unexpected result: these ancient drugs that we are apt to call "magical" and the Indians consider divine, contained as their psychoactive principles

some of our already familiar ergot alkaloids. The main components were lysergic acid amide and lysergic acid hydroxyethylamide, both water-soluble alkaloids, closely related to lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), as is evident even to the non-chemist. Another constituent of the *ololiuhqui* alkaloids was ergonovine, the uterotonic principle of ergot.

The psychoactive property of these simple lysergic acid amides, closely related to LSD, is well established. The question presented itself whether ergonovine, being not only an alkaloidal component of ergot but also of *ololiuhqui*, possessed hallucinogenic activity. In the light of its chemical structure this did not seem unlikely: it does not differ much from LSD. But one may ask why, if it is hallucinogenic, this astonishing fact has not been announced, in the light of its use over recent decades in obstetrics. Undoubtedly the answer lies in the extremely low dosage of ergonovine used to stop postpartum bleeding, *viz.* 0.1 to 0.25 mg. The effective dose of lysergic acid amide is 1 to 2 mg by oral application. I decided therefore to test in a self-experiment a corresponding dose of ergonovine:

1 April 1976

- 12.20 h: 2.0 mg ergonovine hydrogenmaleinate, containing 1.5 mg ergonovine base, ingested in a glass of water.  
13.00 h: slight nausea, same effect as I have experienced always in my LSD or psilocybin experiments. Tired, need to lie down. With eyes closed colored figures.  
13.30 h: the trees in the nearby forest seem to live, their branches moving in a threatening way.  
14.30 h: strong desire to dream, unable to do systematic work, with eyes closed or open afflicted by mollusk-like forms and feelings.  
16.00 h: motives and colors have become clearer, but bearing still some hidden dangers.  
17.00 h: after a short sleep I awoke by a kind of inner explosion of all the senses.  
18.00 h: an unexpected visit forced me to become active, but during the whole evening I lived more in an inner than in the outer world.  
22.00 h: all effects worn off, normal feeling.

This was an experiment performed without attention to "set and setting" but it proves that ergonovine possesses a psychotropic, mood-changing, slightly hallucinogenic activity when taken in the same amount as is an effective dose of lysergic acid amide, the main constituent of *ololiuhqui*. Its po-

tency is about one twentieth of the potency of LSD and about five times that of psilocybin.

There is a further finding that may prove to be of utmost importance in considering Wasson's question. The main constituents of the Mexican morning glory seeds are (a) lysergic acid amide (= "ergine"), and (b) lysergic acid hydroxyethylamide, and these are also the main alkaloids in ergot growing on the wild grass *Paspalum distichum* L. This grass grows commonly all around the Mediterranean basin and is often infected with *Claviceps paspali*. F. Arcamone *et al.*<sup>3</sup> were the first to discover these alkaloids in ergot of *P. distichum*, in 1960.

Within the kinds of ergot produced by the various species of the genus *Claviceps* and its many hosts, cereals and wild grasses, types of ergot do exist that contain hallucinogenic alkaloids, the same alkaloids as in the Mexican hallucinogenic morning-glories. These alkaloids, mainly lysergic acid amide, lysergic acid hydroxyethylamide, and ergonovine, are soluble in water, in contrast to the non-hallucinogenic medicinally useful alkaloids of the ergotamine and ergotoxine type. With the techniques and equipment available in antiquity it was therefore easy to prepare an hallucinogenic extract from suitable kinds of ergot.

What suitable kinds of ergot were accessible to the ancient Greeks? No rye grew there, but wheat and barley did and *Claviceps purpurea* flourishes on both. We analyzed ergot of wheat and ergot of barley in our laboratory and they were found to contain basically the same alkaloids as ergot of rye, *viz.* alkaloids of the ergotamine and ergotoxine group, ergonovine, and sometimes also traces of lysergic acid amide. As I said before, ergonovine and lysergic acid amide, both psychoactive, are soluble in water whereas the other alkaloids are not. As we all know, ergot differs in its chemical constituents according to its host grass and according to geography. We have no way to tell what the chemistry was of the ergot of barley or wheat raised on the Rarian plain in the 2nd millennium B.C. But it is certainly not pulling a long bow to assume that the barley grown there was host to an ergot containing, perhaps among others, the soluble hallucinogenic alkaloids. The famous Rarian plain was adjacent to Eleusis. Indeed this may well have led to the choice of Eleusis for Demeter's temple, and for the growth of the

<sup>3</sup> Arcamone, F., Bonino, C., Chain, E. B., Ferretti, A., Pennella, P., Tonolo, A., and Vero, L.; *Nature* (London) 187, 238 (1960).

cluster of powerful myths surrounding them and Triptolemus that still exert their spell on us today.

The separation of the hallucinogenic agents by simple water solution from the non-soluble ergotamine and ergotoxine alkaloids was well within the range of possibilities open to Early Man in Greece. An easier method still would have been to have recourse to some kind of ergot like that growing on the grass *Paspalum distichum*, which contains only alkaloids that are hallucinogenic and which could even have been used directly in powder form. As I said before, *P. distichum* grows everywhere around the Mediterranean basin. During the many centuries when the Eleusinian Mysteries were thriving and holding the antique Greek world enthralled, may not the hierophants of Eleusis have been broadening their knowledge and improving their skills? For the Greek world as for us, the Mysteries are linked to Demeter and Kore, and they and Triptolemus are the famed mythical progenitors of cultivated wheat and barley. But in the course of time the hierophants could easily have discovered *Claviceps paspali* growing on the grass *Paspalum distichum*. Here they would be able to get their hallucinogen direct, straight and pure. But I mention this only as a possibility or a likelihood, and not because we need *P. distichum* to answer Wasson's question.

Finally we must also discuss an ergot parasitical to a wild grass called in scientific nomenclature *Lolium temulentum* L. In English this is most widely known as darnel or cockle or (in the Bible) tares, a weed that plagues grain crops. It is sometimes called "wild rye grass", an unfortunate name because wild rye has nothing to do with rye: the rye of "wild rye grass" is of utterly different etymology. In classic Greek darnel was *aira* and in classic Latin was *loliu[m]*. Its name in French is *ivraie* and in German *Taumelloch*, both names pointing to a belief in its psychotropic activity in the folk knowledge of the traditional European herbalists. A citation for ivraie in A.D. 1236 has been found, and it must go back much further than that.

Analysis of *Lolium temulentum* in my laboratory and an extended botanical, chemical, and pharmacological investigation by I. Katz<sup>4</sup> showed that the plant itself contains no alkaloids nor does it possess any pharmacological activity. But the *Lolium* species (*L. temulentum* and *L. perenne*) are notoriously prey to the *Claviceps* fungus. The psychotropic

reputation of darnel must therefore be attributed to its parasitic infection by ergot. Samples of ergot grown on *L. temulentum* and *L. perenne* collected in Germany, France, and Switzerland showed large variation in their alkaloidal composition. Some contained substantial amounts of ergonovine together with alkaloids of the ergotamine and ergotoxine group.<sup>5</sup> A species of ergot growing on darnel may have existed in ancient Greece that contained mainly hallucinogenic alkaloids of ergot such as we have found in ergot of *Paspalum*.

In conclusion I now answer Wasson's question. The answer is yes, Early Man in ancient Greece could have arrived at an hallucinogen from ergot. He might have done this from ergot growing on wheat or barley. An easier way would have been to use the ergot growing on the common wild grass *Paspalum*. This is based on the assumption that the herbalists of ancient Greece were as intelligent and resourceful as the herbalists of pre-Conquest Mexico.

ALBERT HOFMANN

<sup>4</sup> Katz, I.: Contribution à Etude de l'ivraie envirante (*Lolium temulentum* L.). Thèse présentée a l'Ecole Polytechnique Federale, Zurich, 1949.

<sup>5</sup> Kobel, H., Sandoz Research Laboratories, Basel. Private communication.

## CHAPTER THREE

# SOLVING THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERY

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We are told that there once was a young Athenian who was much taken with the beauty of a courtesan in one of the brothels of Corinth. His attempts to repay her favors in some special way were continually frustrated by the madam, who insisted upon confiscating all private gifts. To give the girl something that would be hers alone, he hit upon the idea of offering her an immaterial, and thereby inalienable, benefit: he would pay the expenses for her introduction into the blessed community of those who had witnessed the secret religious ceremony practiced at the village of Eleusis. That sight was generally considered the culminating experience of a lifetime. And so she was allowed to travel to Athens, together with the madam and a younger girl from the brothel. The lover lodged them all with a friend while they prepared themselves by the preliminary rites. The full sequence would require more than half a year's residence in Athens. Then at last, amidst the throng of thousands who each autumn for the first and only time made the pilgrimage, they too walked the Sacred Road, crossing the narrow bridge that still today can be seen, now submerged in the brackish waters of the swamp that once divided Athens from the territory of its neighboring village, some fourteen miles distant, a region sacred for its special affinity with the realm of departed spirits, who were thought to insure the fertility of the adjacent plain of grain. The procession of pilgrims symbolically passed the frontier between worlds, a momentous journey characterized by its difficulty, for the bridge was expressly constructed too narrow for vehicular traffic and ahead, just as they arrived at the village itself, it was traditional that they would be obscenely insulted by masked men, who lined the bridge across the final boundary of water.

Each year new candidates for initiation would walk that Sacred Road, people of all classes, emperors and prostitutes, slaves and freemen, an annual celebration that was to last for upwards of a millennium and a half, until the pagan religion finally succumbed to the intense hatred and rivalry of a newer sect, the recently legitimized Christians in the fourth century of our era. The only requirement, beyond a knowledge of the Greek language, was the price of the sacrificial pig and the fees of the various

priests and guides, a little more than a month's wages, plus the expense of the stay in Athens.

Every step of the way recalled some aspect of an ancient myth that told how the Earth Mother, the goddess Demeter, had lost her only daughter, the maiden Persephone, abducted as she gathered flowers by her bridegroom, who was Hades or the lord of death. The pilgrims called upon Iakchos as they walked. It was he who was thought to lead them on their way: through him, they would summon back the queen Persephone into the realm of the living. When at last they arrived at Eleusis, they danced far into the night beside the well where originally the mother had mourned for her lost Persephone. As they danced in honor of those sacred two goddesses and of their mysterious consort Dionysus, the god of inebriants, the stars and the moon and the daughters of Ocean would seem to join in their exultation. Then they passed through the gates of the fortress walls, beyond which, shielded from profane view, was enacted the great Mystery of Eleusis.

It was called a mystery because no one, under pain of death, could reveal what happened within the sanctuary. My colleagues and I, working from hints in numerous sources, have ventured to go beyond that forbidden gate.

Ancient writers unanimously indicate that something was seen in the great *telesterion* or initiation hall within the sanctuary. To say so much was not prohibited. The experience was a vision whereby the pilgrim became someone who saw, an *eopotes*. The hall, however, as can now be reconstructed from archaeological remains, was totally unsuited for theatrical performances; nor do the epigraphically extant account books for the sanctuary record any expenditures for actors or stage apparatus. What was witnessed there was no play by actors, but *phasmata*, ghostly apparitions, in particular, the spirit of Persephone herself, returned from the dead with her newborn son, conceived in the land of death. The Greeks were sophisticated about drama and it is highly unlikely that they could have been duped by some kind of theatrical trick, especially since it is people as intelligent as the poet Pindar and the tragedian Sophocles who have testified to the overwhelming value of what was seen at Eleusis.

There were physical symptoms, moreover, that accompanied the vision: fear and a trembling in the limbs, vertigo, nausea, and a cold sweat. Then there came the vision, a sight amidst an aura of brilliant light that suddenly flickered through the darkened chamber. Eyes had never before seen the like, and apart from the formal prohibition against telling of what had happened, the experience itself was incommunicable, for there are no words adequate to the task. Even a poet could only say that he had seen the beginning and the end of life and known that they were one, something given by god. The division between earth and sky melted into a pillar of light.

These are the symptomatic reactions not to a drama or ceremony, but to a mystical vision; and since the sight could be offered to thousands of initiates each year dependably upon schedule, it seems obvious that an hallucinogen must have induced it. We are confirmed in this conclusion by two further observations: a special potion, as we know, was drunk prior to the visual experience; and secondly, a notorious scandal was uncovered in the classical age, when it was discovered that numerous aristocratic Athenians had begun celebrating the Mystery at home with groups of drunken guests at dinner parties.

To identify the Eleusinian drug, we must first find the pattern of meaning that underlies the Mystery. The sacred myth that narrates the events involved in the founding of the Mystery is recorded in the so-called Homeric hymn to Demeter, an anonymous poem dating from the seventh century B.C., seven centuries later than the probable date of the first performance of the ceremony. In it we are told how the goddess Persephone was abducted by her bridegroom Hades to the realm of the dead when she picked a special hundred-headed *narkissos* while gathering flowers with the daughters of Ocean in a place called Nysa. All Greek words ending in *-issos* derive from the language spoken by the agrarian cultures dwelling in the Greek lands before the coming of the migrating Indo-European Greeks. The Greeks themselves, however, thought that the *narkissos* was so named because of its narcotic properties, obviously because that was the essential nature or symbolism of Persephone's flower. The marital abduction or seizure of maidens while gathering flowers is, moreover, a common theme in Greek myths and Plato records a rationalized version of such stories in which the companion of the seized maiden is named Pharmaceia or, as the name means, the "use of drugs". The particular myth that Plato is rationalizing is in fact one that traced the

descent of the priesthood at Eleusis. There can be no doubt that Persephone's abduction was a drug-induced seizure.

That fact has never been noticed by Classicists, despite its absolute expectability in terms of what we know about the religions of the agrarian peoples who preceded the Greeks. Those religions centered upon the female's procreativity and the cyclical rebirth and death of both plants and mankind. She was the Great Mother and the entire world was her Child. The essential event in those religions was the Sacred Marriage, in which the priestess periodically communed with the realm of spirits within the earth to renew the agricultural year and the civilized life that grew upon the earth. Her male consort was a vegetative spirit, both her son who grew from the earth and the mate who would abduct her to the fecundating other realm as he possessed her upon his death. When the roving Indo-Europeans settled in the Greek lands, their immortal Father God of the sky, who was Zeus, became assimilated to the pattern of the dying and reborn vegetative consort of the Great Mother. There are indications of this assimilation in the traditions about the Zeus who was born and died in Crete. Furthermore, archaeological remains from the Minoan-Mycenaean period of Greek culture frequently depict visionary experience encountered by women engaged in rituals involving flowers. The priestesses or goddesses themselves occur as idols decorated with vegetative motifs, accompanied by their serpent consort or crowned with a diadem of opium capsules. Moreover, the myths that narrate the founding of the various Mycenaean citadels show, as we might expect, recurrent variations upon the Sacred Marriage enacted between the immigrant founder and the autochthonous female in ecstatic contexts. Most interesting among these are the traditions about Mykenai (Mycenae) itself, for it was said to have been founded when the female of that place lost her head to the male of the new dynasty, who had picked a mushroom. The etymology of Mykenai, which was recognized in antiquity but has been repeatedly rejected by modern scholars, is correctly derived from Mykene, the bride of the *mykes* or mushroom. Fungoid manifestations of the vegetative consort in the Sacred Marriage can also be detected in the symbolism of the founding fathers at other Mycenaean sites, perhaps because that particular wave of immigrants brought knowledge of the wild and untameable mushroom with them on their movement south into the Greek lands. At Athens in the classical period, the ancient Sacred Marriage was still celebrated annually by the wife of the sacral head of

state: in the month of February, she would unite with the god Dionysus.

It was as Dionysus that the Zeus who had been assimilated as consort to the Mother Goddess survived into the classical period. His name designates him as the Zeus of Nysa, for Dios is a form of the word Zeus. Nysa was not only, as we have seen, the place where Persephone was abducted, but also the name for wherever was enacted that same nuptial encounter involving the passion of Dionysus' birth and death. When he possessed his women devotees, the maenads or bacchants, he was synonymous with Hades, the lord of death and bridegroom to the goddess Persephone. The maenads, like Persephone, also gathered flowers. We know this because their emblem was the *thyrsos*, a fennel stalk stuffed with ivy leaves; such hollow stalks were customarily used by herb gatherers as receptacles for their cuttings, and the ivy that was stuffed into the maenads' stalks was sacred to Dionysus and reputed to be a psycho-tropic plant.

Dionysus, however, could possess his ecstatic brides through the agency of other plants as well, for he was the vegetative consort residing in all manner of inebriants, including apparently certain of the fungi. The stipe, by analogy to the maenads' emblem, was also called a *thyrsos*, with the mushroom's cap substituted for the psychoactive herbs. Dionysus himself was born prematurely in the mystical seventh month during a winter snowfall when his celestial father struck his earth bride Semele at Thebes with a bolt of lightning; in the same manner mushrooms were thought to be engendered wherever lightning struck the earth. The father of Dionysus was another Dionysus, as would be expected in a Sacred Marriage, for the child born at the time of the earth's renewal is identical with the ingested consort who will reunite his mother-bride with the awesome nether realm from which life must forever be reborn. Thus not surprisingly we are told that Semele also conceived Dionysus when she drank a potion compounded of her own son's heart. So too was Dionysus like his father also called the thunderer, for despite the gentleness of his infancy and his sometimes effeminate appearance, he could suddenly metamorphose into the virulence of his full manhood, in which form he was a bull, rending the earth, as at his birth, announced by a bellowing, the mykema that signified the presence of the *mykes* or mushroom. His symbol was the phallos itself, by a common metaphor also called the *mykes*.

It was with the vine, however, and its fermented juice that Dionysus was chiefly associated. Mushrooms themselves in fact were considered a fermenta-

tation of the earth, a perfect symbol of rebirth from the cold realm of putrefaction that was the mouldy other world. A similar process was sensed in the frothing turmoil whereby the fungal yeast converted grapes into wine. In wine the god had found his greatest blessing for mankind; here his untameable, wild nature had succumbed to domestication. He himself was said to have first discovered the properties of this plant that had grown from the spilled blood of the gods when he noticed a serpent drinking its toxin from the fruit, for serpents were thought to derive their poisons from the herbs they ate, just as conversely it was said that serpents could transfer their toxins to plants in their vicinity. Dionysus taught man the way to calm this gift's violent nature by diluting it with water. And customarily it was mixed with water that the Greeks drank their wines.

This custom of diluting wine deserves our attention since the Greeks did not know the art of distillation and hence the alcoholic content of their wines could not have exceeded about fourteen per cent, at which concentration the alcohol from natural fermentation becomes fatal to the fungus that produced it, thereby terminating the process. Simple evaporation without distillation could not increase the alcoholic content since alcohol, which has a lower boiling point than water, will merely escape to the air, leaving the final product weaker instead of more concentrated. Alcohol in fact was never isolated as the toxin in wine and there is no word for it in ancient Greek. Hence the dilution of wine, usually with at least three parts of water, could be expected to produce a drink of slight inebriating properties.

That, however, was not the case. The word for drunkenness in Greek designates a state of raving madness. We hear of some wines so strong that they could be diluted with twenty parts of water and that required at least eight parts water to be drunk safely, for, according to report, the drinking of certain wines straight actually caused permanent brain damage and in some cases even death. Just three small cups of diluted wine were enough in fact to bring the drinker to the threshold of madness. Obviously the alcohol could not have been the cause of these extreme reactions. We can also document the fact that different wines were capable of inducing different physical symptoms, ranging from slumber to insomnia and hallucinations.

The solution to this apparent contradiction is simply that ancient wine, like the wine of most early peoples, did not contain alcohol as its sole inebriant but was ordinarily a variable infusion of herbal tox-

ins in a vinous liquid. Unguents, spices, and herbs, all with recognized psychotropic properties, could be added to the wine at the ceremony of its dilution with water. A description of such a ceremony occurs in Homer's *Odyssey*, where Helen prepares a special wine by adding the euphoric *nepenthes* to the wine that she serves her husband and his guest. The fact is that the Greeks had devised a spectrum of ingredients for their drinks, each with its own properties.

Thus the wine of Dionysus was the principle medium whereby the classical Greeks continued to partake of the ancient ecstasy resident in all the vegetative forms that were the Earth's child. In social situations, the drinking was regulated by a leader, who determined the degree of inebriation that he would impose upon the revelers as they ceremonially drank a measured sequence of toasts. At sacral events, the wine would be more potent and the express purpose of the drinking was to induce that deeper drunkenness in which the presence of the deity could be felt.

The herbal inebriants that figured in these Dionysian rites of drinking required magical procedures when the herbs were gathered. As wild beings whose spirits were akin to their particular guardian animals, the plants were the objects of a hunt. And the ecstatic rapture they might induce in religious contexts inevitably identified them as sexual forces.

Thus the female devotees of the god Dionysus appropriately bore the *thyrsos* as their emblem as they roamed the winter mountainsides in search of the so-called vine that grew suddenly with earth-rending thunder and the bellowing of bulls amidst their night-long dancing; that beloved child, the age-old serpent consort, was the object of their hunt, who was suckled, then like a beast torn to pieces and eaten raw; his own mothers, as was often claimed, were guilty of cannibalism eating his flesh, for like mothers the women would have brought the drug into being, harvesting and compounding it with the help of the god's so-called nurses, in whose loving care he would grow to manhood, eventually to possess them as his brides. Such ceremonies enacted the sacred nuptials of the city's women, who thereby entered the awesome alliance with the nether lord, upon whose realm depended the growth of all this world's fertility of plants and man.

Persephone's abduction at Nysa was prototypic of that first nuptial between the realms, the primal experience of death. In the hunting place called Agrai, in the month of February, which was called the time of flowers, the candidates for the coming initiation at Eleusis experienced in some way the death of Persephone through the ritual mimeses of

those Dionysian events. That occurrence was termed the Lesser Mystery and it was considered a preliminary for the vision of the Greater Mystery that would take place at the time of the autumn sowing in September.

The Greater Mystery was the complement of the Lesser, for it centered upon redemption instead of death, the triumphant return of Persephone from Hades with the infant son she had conceived during her sojourn in communion with the spiritual realm. The Homeric hymn, after its account of Persephone's fatal nuptial encounter, goes on to tell how Demeter came to establish the Greater Mystery. In grief for her lost daughter, she went to Eleusis. Her journey there is a sympathetic imitation of Persephone's entrance into the citadel of Hades, for Eleusis was a simulacrum of the other world, where Demeter too would experience the ominous chthonic phase of her womanhood, not as sacred queen to the lord of death, but as witch and wet-nurse in his house, for when Persephone progresses beyond maidenhood, her mother must make way, relinquishing her former role and moving on to the third stage, when a woman's aging womb brings her once again into proximity with the powers of death. These chthonic or earth-oriented phases of womanhood were symbolized in the goddess Hecate, whose tri-form body expressed the female's totality as bride, wife, and aged nurse in Hades' realm.

At Eleusis, Demeter first attempts to assuage her grief by negating the possibility of the world of death to which she has lost her daughter. She does this by nourishing the royal prince with immortality. His mother, however, objects, for she cannot understand or accept a system that would inevitably alienate the son from his own mother's realm as irredeemably as Persephone from Demeter.

Demeter again attempts a solution, this time an eternity of death, in which she and the maiden would stay forever in their chthonic phase. She causes a plague of sterility so that no life can emerge from the earth. This solution, however, leaves no role for the immortal deities of the sky, whose delicate balance with the forces of the earth is dependent upon the continuing worship of mortal men, who share with them the fruits of life.

The final solution is to heal the universe into which death has now intruded by admitting also the possibility of return into life. Rebirth from death was the secret of Eleusis. In Hades, Persephone, like the earth itself, takes seed into her body and thereby eternally comes back to her ecstatic mother with her new son, only to die as eternally in his fecundating embrace. The sign of the redemption was an ear of

barley, the risen grain, that following the Mystery would be committed once again to the cold earth in the sowing of the sacred plain adjacent to Eleusis.

This was the final mediation that Demeter taught to a second of the royal princes in the citadel of Eleusis. His name was Triptolemus, the trifold warrior, and he becomes the apostle of the new faith, traveling throughout the world on a serpent chariot spreading the gospel of the cultivation of grain. His exact identity was part of the secret of the Mystery, for the various traditions about his parentage suggest that the initiates learned that, like the grain that was his emblem, he was actually the son of the trifold females who were the queens in the house of the lord of death. He was, therefore, another form of Dionysus, who in a similar fashion also was an apostle, traveling in the same manner of cart on his journey teaching man the cultivation of the vine. The pattern indicated in these Eleusinian apostleships clearly signifies the transition from wild botanic growth to the arts of cultivation upon which civilized life must depend.

In the various Eleusinian mythical traditions, several other male figures symbolize a similar transmutation of the wild horror and loss that is death into the ravishingly handsome young man who is born from Hades' realm in pledge of the coming redemption. In one such tradition, he is Iakchos (Iacchus), the joyous Dionysian male who led the initiates toward their vision of salvation; in another, Eubuleus, the serene personification of the cosmological plan wherein the celestial immortals collaborated with the forces of death to show humankind its proper role; in a third, Zagreus, the enigmatic hunting companion of his ecstatic brides. The fourth and most perfect of these transmuted figures is Ploutos, the personification of the wealth that stems from the fertility of man and field. The initiate could expect that this beneficent representative of death would thereafter become welcome in his house as his constant guest, joined by ties of friendship. This Ploutos was originally the vegetative son of Demeter in her more ancient days as Great Mother on Crete, where she conceived him in a thrice plowed field when she united with her intoxicating mate whose name was Iasion, which means "the man of the drug".

Triptolemus, however, was the paramount transmutation, Demeter's special response to the problem of death. It was his sacred barley, solemnly grown in the Rarian plain and threshed on his floor, that was the principle ingredient in the potion drunk by the initiates in preparation for the culminating vision. The formula for that potion is re-

corded in the Homeric hymn. In addition to the barley, it contained water and a fragrant mint called blechon. The mint initially would seem the most likely candidate for the psychoactive agent in the potion, except that all our evidence about this particular mint indicates that it was unsuitable, being neither sufficiently psychotropic to warrant the danger of profane usage nor appropriately revered as the secret drug. Rather, it was openly despised as a sign of the illicit union of man and woman in lustful concubinage without the sacrament of marriage. To just such an unsanctified abduction Demeter had lost her daughter at Nysa and accordingly we are told that the mother vented her displeasure by changing the prostitute of Hades into mint, thereupon grinding and bruising her botanic body. The final Eleusinian solution, on the other hand, will reconcile the mother to the daughter's loss through legitimatizing the nuptial abduction in the rite of matrimony, whereby an heir can accede to the dynastic house. Barley and not mint is the revelation at Eleusis, and it is to it that we must look for the sacred drug.

With the cultivation of grain, man had left his wild, nomadic ways and settled in cities, giving to the earth in order to receive back its harvest. All civilized institutions derived from this delicate accord struck with the dark, cold forces of death. Grain itself was thought to be a hybrid, carefully evolved from more primitive grasses. If not tended with proper care, it could be expected to revert to its worthless, inedible avatar. That primitive sibling to grain was thought to be the plant called *aira* in Greek, *Lolium temulentum* in botanical nomenclature, or commonly in English wild ryes, darned cockle, ivray, or finally "tares" in the Bible. This weed is usually infested with a fungoid growth, *Claviceps purpurea*, ergot or rust, a reddening corruption to which barley was thought to be particularly susceptible. *Aira*, therefore, doubly endangered the cultivated staff of life, first as the renascent primordial grass and secondly as the host for the encroaching ergot infection. The revertive tendency of the infected grain, furthermore, was all too obvious, for when the sclerotia fell to the ground there grew from them not grain but tiny purple mushrooms, the fruiting bodies of the ergot fungus, clearly a return to the species of the unregenerate, wild Dionysian abductor.

Unlike the seedless mushroom, however, ergot would have seemed akin to the kernels of grain that were its host. As well as grain, therefore, it too was Demeter's plant, for she could wear its distinctive color as her robe or on her feet or be named with its

epithet, Erysibe. The hallucinogenic properties of Claviceps were recognized in antiquity, and thus we may surmise that the parallel apostleships of the barley and the vine would have signified analogous transmutations wherein the chthonic spirits submitted to cultivation. Wine, however, was Dionysus' realm, the liquid that gave sleep like death and forgetfulness, whereas Demeter was the earth, dry with the harvest upon which man fed to live. Grain was her sacrament. Upon first coming to Eleusis, Demeter had refused the cup of wine and the initiates thereafter imitated her abstention in deference to the superior symbolism of the potion of barley.

Clearly ergot of barley is the likely psychotropic ingredient in the Eleusinian potion. Its seeming symbiotic relationship to the barley signified an appropriate expropriation and transmutation of the Dionysian spirit to which the grain, Demeter's daughter, was lost in the nuptial embrace with earth. Grain and ergot together, moreover, were joined in a bisexual union as siblings, bearing at the time of the maiden's loss already the potential for her own return and for the birth of the phalloid son that would grow from her body. A similar hermaphroditism occurs in the mythical traditions about the grotesquely fertile woman whose obscene jests were said to have cheered Demeter from her grief just before she drank the potion.

This solution to the Mystery of Eleusis is made still more probable by a papyrus fragment that was brought to my attention by our translator of the Homeric hymn. The fragment preserves a portion of the *Demes*, a comedy by Eupolis written shortly after the scandal of the profanation of the Mystery in the fifth century B.C. It confirms that the profanation did indeed entail the drinking of the sacred *kykeon* and suggests that our identification of the drug it contained is correct. In the comedy, an informer explains to a judge how he had come upon someone who had obviously been drinking the potion since he had barley groats on his moustache. The accused had bribed the informer to say that it was simply porridge and not the potion that he had drunk. By a possible pun, the comedian may even indicate that the incriminating "crumbs of barley" were "purples of barley".

Thus we may now venture past the forbidden gates and reconstruct the scene within the great initiation hall at Eleusis. The preparation of the potion was the central event. With elaborate pageantry, the hierophant, the priest who traced his descent back to the first performance of the Mystery, removed the sclerotia of ergot from the free-standing room constructed inside the *telesterion* over the remains of

the original temple that had stood there in Mycenaean times. As he performed the service, he intoned ancient chants in a falsetto voice, for his role in the Mystery was asexual, a male who had sacrificed his gender to the Great Goddess. He conveyed the grain in chalices to the priestesses, who then danced throughout the hall, balancing the vessels and lamps upon their heads. The grain was next mixed with mint and water in urns, from which the sacred potion was then ladled into the special cups for the initiates to drink their share. Finally, in acknowledgment of their readiness, they all chanted that they had drunk the potion and had handled the secret objects that had come with them on the Sacred Road in sealed baskets. Then, seated on the tiers of steps that lined the walls of the cavernous hall, in darkness they waited. From the potion they gradually entered into ecstasy. You must remember that this potion—an hallucinogen—under the right set and setting, disturbs man's inner ear and trips astonishing ventriloquistic effects. We can rest assured that the hierophants, with generations of experience, knew all the secrets of set and setting. I am sure that there was music, probably both vocal and instrumental, not loud but with authority, coming from hither and yon, now from the depths of the earth, now from outside, now a mere whisper infiltrating the ear, flitting from place to place unaccountably. The hierophants may well have known the art of releasing into the air various perfumes in succession, and they must have contrived the music for a crescendo of expectation, until suddenly the inner chamber was flung open and spirits of light entered the room, subdued lights I think, not blinding, and among them the spirit of Persephone with her new-born son just returned from Hades. She would arrive just as the hierophant raised his voice in ancient measures reserved for the Mystery: "The Terrible Queen has given birth to her son, the Terrible One". This divine birth of the Lord of the Nether World was accompanied by the bellowing roar of a gong-like instrument that outdid, for the ecstatic audience, the mightiest thunderclap, coming from the bowels of the earth.

Some Christian bishops, in the last days of the Mystery, thought they had discovered and could reveal the secret of Eleusis. One said that in this pagan rite there was materialized a stalk of barley. How true according to his limited lights, yet how utterly false. The Bishop had not known the night of nights at Eleusis. He was like one who has not known LSD or the mushrooms of Mexico or the morning glory seeds. For close on to two thousand years a few of the ancient Greeks passed each year

through the portals of Eleusis. There they celebrated the divine gift to mankind of the cultivated grain and they were also initiated into the awe some powers of the nether world through the purple dark of the grain's sibling that Dr. Hofmann has once again made accessible to our generation. The myths of Demeter and Persephone and all their company fit our explanation in every respect. Nothing in any of them is incompatible with our thesis.

Until yesterday we knew of Eleusis only what little a few of the initiates told us but the spell of their words had held generations of mankind enthralled. Now, thanks to Dr. Hofmann and Gordon Wasson, those of us who have experienced the superior hallucinogens may join the fellowship of the ancient initiates in a lasting bond of friendship, a friendship born of a shared experience of a reality deeper far than we had known before.

CARL A. P. RUCK

# CHAPTER FOUR

## ANCILLARY DATA

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A Greek scholar, writing just half a century ago, did not hesitate to dismiss the worship of Demeter at Eleusis as “trivial and absurd; but,” he added, “there can be no doubt that it did much to satisfy the emotional side of the religious instincts of the Greeks. Its modern analogue is perhaps the Salvation Army.” We trust that our own comparisons will be less bizarre than his. In our generation we enjoy the advantage of having rediscovered the hallucinogenic experience. Moreover, the value of interdisciplinary collaboration is that it gives us access to knowledge otherwise apt to be beyond the reach of scholars. Our joint effort has yielded a radical answer to our problem: it sets the stage for much reexamination of traditional opinions about the classical Greeks and their tragic literature in celebration of the god Dionysus.

The ancient testimony about Eleusis is unanimous and unambiguous. Eleusis was the supreme experience in an initiate’s life. It was both physical and mystical: trembling, vertigo, cold sweat, and then a sight that made all previous seeing seem like blindness, a sense of awe and wonder at a brilliance that caused a profound silence since what had just been seen and felt could never be communicated: words are unequal to the task. Those symptoms are unmistakably the experience induced by an hallucinogen. To reach that conclusion, we have only to show that the rational Greeks, and indeed some of the most famous and intelligent amongst them, could experience and enter fully into such irrationality.

Eleusis was different from the convivial inebriation of friends at a *symposium* or the drunken *komos* revel at the festivals of drama. Eleusis was something for which even the maenadic ecstasy of the mountain women was only partial preparation. In their various ways, other Greek cults too enacted aspects of the ancient communion practiced between gods and men, between the living and the dead, but it was at Eleusis alone that the experience occurred with overwhelming finality: here alone was the grand design fulfilled of the maiden resurrected with her son conceived in death, and of the ear of barley that like her had sprouted beneath the earth. By this resurrection was validated the continuance of all that a Greek held most dear, the civilized way of life that, beyond each city’s constitution, was the Greek

heritage, evolved out of aboriginal primitivism just as all life too came from the beneficent accord with the lord of death. Here indeed is a rich full-bodied myth, filled with contradictions like all the myths of an unlettered age, one saying this and another saying that and a third saying something else, but somehow in the end harmonizing into one whole, a myth that for the Greeks explained the beginning and the end of things.

Months of learning and rituals preceded the revelation on the Mystery night, each action programming in further detail the meaning and substance, the full ramifications of the vision that lay ahead. At last the initiates would sit on the steps in the initiation hall. It was all done now except for the finale. They had learned the secret version of the sacred myth, they had bathed in the sea, abstained from various tabu foods and drinks, sacrificed a pig, taken the long walk along the Sacred Way from Athens, and made the perilous crossing of the final division of water before their arrival at the city of their Eleusinian hosts. Outside the sanctuary walls, there was the night-long dance beside the Maiden’s Well on the very ground that the goddess had visited. Then there was the fast and the momentous entrance into the forbidden territory past the cave that was an entrance to Hades and the rock where Demeter had sat in grief. In the initiation hall, there was the final ceremonial dance of the priestesses carrying the chalice of grain upon their heads as they mixed and distributed the sacred potion: fragrant *blechon*, the despised herb associated with the illicit nature of the abduction, immersed in water to which was added a sprinkling of flour from barley grown in the Rarian plain. The barley’s potential as the foodstuff for mankind depended upon keeping at bay the encroachment of the reddening corruption that would draw it back to its worthless avatar, the rust-infested weed. Like the *blechon*, the weed too was thus associated with primitivism and the ways of life before the institutions of society brought man to a higher mode of existence. Of these two plants the initiates drank and then paused expectant for redemption while the hierophant chanted the ancient words. Then, suddenly, there was light and the boundaries on this world burst their bounds as spiritual presences were felt in their midst and the hall was flooded with glowing mystery.

From beginning to end here there was a reenactment of a sacred drama in which the initiates as well as the officiants had their role to play, until at last they experienced as actors the ineffable, all of their senses and emotions being shot through with what would thereafter be forever the unspeakable.

As the initiates passed through the lengthy proceedings, they were admitted to many secrets, but the hierophants may well have withheld from them the Secret of Secrets: the sacred water of the potion had already soaked up in the right dosage from the immersed ergot what it contained of ergine and ergonovine, as we call them today. But the hierophants were certainly, through the centuries, seeking ways to improve their technique, their formulae. In the course of those two millennia may they not have discovered a kind of ergot that contains solely the hallucinogenic alkaloids such as has been found in modern times in ergot of *Paspalum distichum*? Indeed herbalists other than the hierophantic families may have shared in this discovery and it may have been their knowledge that prompted the rash of profanations in B.C. 415. The inside story of those events will never be known but that there was a story to tell is certain.

In unlettered cultures the knowledge of the herbalist—the knowledge of the properties of plants and their use—was everywhere a body of secret lore passed on by word of mouth from herbalist to apprentice and sometimes from one herbalist to another. The apprenticeship took years before one practiced on one's own, and one never stopped learning. There were questions of dosage, of side effects, of proper plant ingredients that became poisons when taken to excess. In Mexico Bernardino de Sahagun and Francisco Hernandez were gifted Spaniards and they spent endless effort and time to take down from the Indians the virtues of various Mexican plants. But they were Europeans who knew not the American plant world, and in their European world they were certainly not what we would call botanists or herbalists. Their intentions were good but their ignorance was complete. What they have to tell us about the hallucinogens is childish. They could have tried the hallucinogens but elected not to do so, spurned the chance. What a different story they would have told us if they had lived for a number of years as apprentices of the Indian *sabios*.

In the Homeric hymn to Demeter, on arriving at Eleusis, tired and disconsolate over the loss of her daughter Persephone, Demeter was offered a drink of wine, which she declined. Since every act in this narrative had mythic meaning, it seems that drink-

ing the alcoholic beverage did not go with the drinking of the divine potion called *kykeon*. The two kinds of inebriation were incompatible. In Mexico those who will take the mushrooms know that they must refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages for four days before the *velada*, as the mushroom celebration is called. Alcoholic inebriation would profane, would defile, the divine draught, alike in Mexico and Greece.

The Eleusinian Mysteries were in the exclusive hands of the Eumolpus and Kerykes families. For close to two thousand years, these hierophants governed with autocratic authority the rites at Eleusis. By contrast, in the sacred mushroom country of Mexico every village has its *sabios* ("wisemen") who are the custodians of the rite. (In some remote Mixe villages the individual families take the mushrooms when they feel the need, without the guidance of a sabio. Whether this informal practice in the Mixe country marks a breakdown in the rite or the survival of an earlier archaic procedure, we do not know.) In Greece the "initiate" took the potion only once in his life, and thus he could not compare successive experiences. In Mexico one may consult the mushroom whenever a grave family problem presents itself. Some Indians choose never to take the mushroom, others only once, yet others intermittently. The newcomer to the experience is constantly warned that ingesting the hallucinogen is in the highest degree *delicado*, "delicate" with a connotation of grave danger.

At Eleusis and in Mexico certain items of food were proscribed for some time before the big night. It is impossible to compare the dietary exclusions, so different are the foods, except that in both cases eggs are tabu. Fasting was practiced in Greece and also in Mexico, from the morning throughout the day: in both cases one faced the night on an empty stomach. In Mexico before the Conquest it was the practice in aristocratic circles to drink nourishing chocolate spiked with the inebriating mushrooms, in this way breaking the fast as the events of the night were launched on their course. Owing to the silence enjoined on everyone who had taken part in the Mystery, there are scarcely any hints as to what happened in the writers of the flourishing period of Eleusis, but in the early centuries of the Christian era, with Eleusis breaking down, we discover a few references, obscure, inhibited, that may permit us some uncertain glimpses. We find mention of a collation served to the initiates when a large cake called the *pelanos*, made of barley and wheat harvested in the adjacent sacred Rarian plain, was broken into pieces and the portions served to all. In the

sources one hears of a bond of alliance and friendship that sprang up among the initiates, and some have suggested that this sprang from the collation they had shared together. It is not incompatible with the Greek texts to suppose that the collation paralleled the breaking of the fast in Mexico, the *pelanos* taking the place of the chocolate. But surely the bond of alliance and friendship had nothing to do with the collation: nothing so jejune would have sufficed. The overwhelming effect of the night under the influence of an hallucinogen gives natural birth to a feeling of shared supernatural experience never to be forgotten, a feeling of *cofradia*, of brotherhood. Two of us have known this personally in Mexico: those who pass through a *velada*, in the right set and setting, live through an awesome experience, and feel welling up within them a tie that unites them with their companions of that night of nights that will last for as long as they live. Here we think is the bond of alliance and friendship of which the Greek sources speak obscurely.

Then there is the matter of secrecy. In Mexico nothing had been heard of the sacred mushrooms in sophisticated circles since the early friars mentioned them briefly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It has been said that the mushrooms were a "secret" of the Indians living in the highlands of southern Mexico. Our own little group flushed them out into the open. But we think this "secret" was never really a secret. In the Indian communities everyone knew about them and also about the morning-glory seeds. Every villager could, if he wished, learn the art of recognizing the sacred mushrooms and many did so. There was a small trade in the mushrooms, supplying the demand among the natives who had moved to the cities and who still wished to "consult" them. The Church had originally opposed them and the Holy Office of the Inquisition in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries tried to stamp out the native use of them by vigorous persecutions. They failed, of course, but the natural mycophobia of the Spanish population, their contempt for peculiar native practices, and the similar attitude of the French, the Germans, and the English who later came to know Mexico led naturally to an absence of communication between the natives and the occupying races on matters that lay closest to the Indians' hearts. It is small wonder that the sacred mushrooms, after an abortive spate of notices, hopelessly inadequate, in the writings of the early friars, have remained unknown to the world to our own times. The Indians would not take the initiative in speaking about them. The "secrecy" was not a conspiracy of silence: it was imposed on the

Indians by the White Man, owing to the lack of intelligent and sympathetic curiosity in the elite of the White circles.

The secrecy in the ancient Greek world about the Eleusinian Mysteries was somewhat different. The laws of Athens made it a crime to speak about what went on at Eleusis in the telesterion. Toward the end of the Homeric hymn to Demeter, this silence is expressly enjoined on all initiates. In B.C. 415 there was a spate of deliberate profanations of the Mysteries by the jet set in Athens and a crackdown followed, harsh penalties being inflicted. But the secrecy ran far beyond the reach of the laws of Athens. That secrecy ruled everywhere in the Greek world and was never seriously violated. It too was self-enforcing. Those who knew the superior hallucinogens through personal experience were not inclined to discuss with outsiders what was revealed to them: words could not convey to strangers the wonders of that night and there would always be the danger that the effort to explain would be met with incredulity, with the scoffing and mockery that would seem to the initiate sacrilegious, would wound him in the very core of his being. One who has known the ineffable is loath to embark on explanations: words are useless.

So far as we can say, at every point what happened at Eleusis fits in with the hallucinogenic experience in Mexico but in one major respect the Mexican rite outdistances Eleusis. They both share in the great Vision ("Vision" embracing all the senses and the emotions), but in Mexico the sacred mushrooms (and the other superior hallucinogens) serve also as oracles. The hierophants of Eleusis saw a new crop of initiates every year and there were many initiates. With the limitations that this procedure imposed, they could not serve as consultants either to individuals or the State on grave problems where these would be needing advice. In Mexico, on the other hand, the hallucinogen is consulted from time to time on all kinds of serious matters. The questions put to the mushrooms must be serious: if they are unworthy or frivolous, the suppliant is in for a sharp rebuff. Faith in the mushrooms among the Indians where traditional beliefs still prevail is absolute. When the suppliant has observed all the tabus, when the *velada* takes place under the right circumstances of darkness and silence, and when he poses his questions with a pure heart, the mushrooms will not lie. So say the Indians. And such meager evidence as one of us has suggests that they may be right.

Toward the end of the last century the world learned of peyotl and early in the middle of this

century the hallucinogenic morning glory seeds were identified by Richard Evans Schultes. A little later the sacred mushrooms of Mexico received their full meed of public attention, located and written up by Roger Heim and one of us. They were shown the way by a botanist, Blas Pablo Reko, and an anthropologist, Robert J. Weitlaner. Now the three of us are submitting to the modern world what well may be the key to the mystery of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The tie that binds the grain of Triptolemus to the supernal experience of Eleusis, easily and safely attainable from ergot, is so close and natural and poetically satisfying, complying point by point with the myth of Demeter and Persephone, that are we not virtually compelled to accept this solution?

Further avenues of inquiry open up. For example, the pregnant empresses of Byzantium lived in a porphyry-lined chamber so that their progeny would be born "in the purple" ("porphyry" = purple). Was this "purple" the color of *Claviceps purpurea* and do we have here a posthumous outcropping of the purple-robed Demeter and Hades-of-the-purple-hair? The earliest codices were written on purple vellum. Was this because only the most exalted color would be fitting, eg, for St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*? By a knee-jerk reflex the values of the Pagan world would thus live on under the Christian Dispensation.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE HOMERIC HYMN TO DEMETER

1-3 I begin to sing of rich-haired Demeter, awful goddess—of her and her trim-ankled daughter whom Aidoneus rapt away, given to him by all-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer.

4-18 Apart from Demeter, lady of the golden sword and glorious fruits, she was playing with the deep-bosomed daughters of Oceanus and gathering flowers over a soft meadow, roses and crocuses and beautiful violets, irises also and hyacinths and the narcissus, which Earth made to grow at the will of Zeus and to please the Host of Many, to be a snare for the bloom-like girl—a marvellous, radiant flower. It was a thing of awe whether for deathless gods or mortal men to see: from its root grew a hundred blooms and is smelled most sweetly, so that all wide heaven above and the whole earth and the sea's salt swell laughed for joy. And the girl was amazed and reached out with both hands to take the lovely toy; but the wide-pathed earth yawned there in the plain of Nysa, and the lord, Host of Many, with his immortal horses sprang out upon her—the Son of Cronos, He who has many names.<sup>1</sup>

19-32 He caught her up reluctant on his golden car and bare her away lamenting. Then she cried out shrilly with her voice, calling upon her father, the Son of Cronos, who is most high and excellent. But no one, either of the deathless gods or of mortal men, heard her voice, nor yet the olive-trees bearing rich fruit: only tender-hearted Hecate, bright-coiffed, the daughter of Persaeus, heard the girl from her cave, and the lord Helios, Hyperion's bright son, as she cried to her father, the Son of Cronos. But he was sitting aloof, apart from the gods, in his temple where many pray, and receiving sweet offerings from mortal men. So he, that Son of Cronos, of many names, who is Ruler of Many and Host of Many, was bearing her away by leave of Zeus on his immortal chariot—his own brother's child and all unwilling.

33-39 And so long as she, the goddess, yet beheld earth and starry heaven and the strong-flowing sea where fishes shoal, and the rays of the sun, and still hoped

to see her dear mother and the tribes of the eternal gods, so long hope calmed her great heart for all her trouble.... (LACUNA) ....and the heights of the mountains and the depths of the sea rang with her immortal voice: and her queenly mother heard her.

Bitter pain seized her heart, and she rent the covering upon her divine hair with her dear hands: her dark cloak she cast down from both her shoulders and sped, like a wild-bird, over the firm land and yielding sea, seeking her child. But no one would tell her the truth, neither god nor mortal men; and of the birds of omen none came with true news for her. Then for nine days queenly Deo wandered over the earth with flaming torches in her hands, so grieved that she never tasted ambrosia and the sweet draught of nectar, nor sprinkled her body with water. But when the tenth enlightening dawn had come, Hecate, with a torch in her hands, met her, and spoke to her and told her news:

"Queenly Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of good gifts, what god of heaven or what mortal man has rapt away Persephone and pierced with sorrow your dear heart? For I heard her voice, yet saw not with my eyes who it was. But I tell you truly and shortly all I know."

So, then, said Hecate. And the daughter of rich-haired Rhea answered her not, but sped swiftly with her, holding flaming torches in her hands. So they came to Helios, who is watchman of both gods and men, and stood in front of his horses: and the bright goddess enquired of him: "Helios, do you at least regard me, goddess as I am, if ever by word or deed of mine I have cheered your heart and spirit. Through the fruitless air I heard the thrilling cry of my daughter whom I bare, sweet scion of my body and lovely in form, as of one seized violently; though with my eyes I saw nothing. But you—for with your beams you look down from the bright upper air Over all the earth and sea—tell me truly of my dear child, if you have seen her anywhere, what god or mortal man has violently seized her against her will and mine, and so made off."

So said she. And the Son of Hyperion answered her: "Queen Demeter, daughter of rich-haired Rhea, I will tell you the truth; for I greatly reverence and pity you in your grief for your trim-ankled daughter. None other of the deathless gods is to blame, but only cloud-gathering Zeus who gave her

<sup>1</sup> The Greeks feared to name Pluto directly and mentioned him by one of many descriptive titles, such as 'Host of Many': compare the Christian use of *o diabolos* or our 'Evil One'.

to Hades, her father's brother, to be called his buxom wife. And Hades seized her and took her loudly crying in his chariot down to his realm of mist and gloom. Yet, goddess, cease your loud lament and keep not vain anger unrelentingly: Ai-doneus, the Ruler of Many, is no unfitting husband among the deathless gods for your child, being your own brother and born of the same stock: also, for honour, he has that third share which he received when division was made at the first, and is appointed lord of those among whom he dwells."

88-9 So he spake, and called to his horses: and at his chiding they quickly whirled the swift chariot along, like long-winged birds.

90-112 But grief yet more terrible and savage came into the heart of Demeter, and thereafter she was so angered with the dark-clouded Son of Cronos that she avoided the gathering of the gods and high Olympus, and went to the towns and rich fields of men, disfiguring her form a long while. And no one of men or deep-bosomed women knew her when they saw her, until she came to the house of wise Celeus who then was lord of fragrant Eleusis. Vexed in her dear heart, she sat near the wayside by the Maiden Well, from which the women of the place were used to draw water, in a shady place over which grew an olive shrub. And she was like an ancient woman who is cut off from childbearing and the gifts of garland-loving Aphrodite, like the nurses of king's children who deal justice, or like the house-keepers in their echoing halls. There the daughters of Celeus, son of Eleusis, saw her, as they were coming for easy-drawn water, to carry it in pitchers of bronze to their dear father's house: four were they and like goddesses in the flower of their girlhood, Callidice and Cleisidice and lovely Demo and Callithoe who was the eldest of them all. They knew her not,—for the gods are not easily discerned by mortals—but standing near by her spoke winged words:

113-7 "Old mother, whence and who are you of folk born long ago? Why are you gone away from the city and do not draw near the houses? For there in the shady halls are women of just such age as you, and others younger; and they would welcome you both by word and by deed."

118-44 Thus they said. And she, that queen among goddesses answered them saying: "Hail, dear children, whosoever you are of woman-kind. I will tell you my story; for it is not unseemly that I should tell you truly what you ask. Doso is my name, for my stately mother gave it me. And now I am come from Crete over the sea's wide back,—not willingly; but pirates brought me thence by force of strength

against my liking. Afterwards they put in with their swift craft to Thoricus, and there the women landed on the shore in full throng and the men likewise, and they began to make ready a meal by the stern-cables of the ship. But my heart craved not pleasant food, and I fled secretly across the dark country and escaped by masters, that they should not take me unpurchased across the sea, there to win a price for me. And so I wandered and am come here: and I know not at all what land this is or what people are in it. But may all those who dwell on Olympus give you husbands and birth of children as parents desire, so you take pity on me, maidens, and show me this clearly that I may learn, dear children, to the house of what man and woman I may go, to work for them cheerfully at such tasks as belong to a woman of my age. Well could I nurse a new born child, holding him in my arms, or keep house, or spread my masters' bed in a recess of the well-built chamber, or teach the women their work."

So said the goddess. And straightway the unwed maiden Callidice, goodliest in form of the daughters of Celeus, answered her and said:

"Mother, what the gods send us, we mortals bear perforce, although we suffer; for they are much stronger than we. But now I will teach you clearly, telling you the names of men who have great power and honour here and are chief among the people, guarding our city's coif of towers by their wisdom and true judgements: there is wise Triptolemus and Diocles and Polyxeinus and blameless Eumolpus and Dolichus and our own brave father. All these have wives who manage in the house, and no one of them, so soon as she has seen you, would dishonour you and turn you from the house, but they will welcome you; for indeed you are godlike. But if you will, stay here; and we will go to our father's house and tell Metaneira, our deep-bosomed mother, all this matter fully, that she may bid you rather come to our home than search after the houses of others. She has an only son, late-born, who is being nursed in our well-built house, a child of many prayers and welcome: if you could bring him up until he reached the full measure of youth, any one of womankind who should see you would straightway envy you, such gifts would our mother give for his upbringing."

So she spake: and the goddess bowed her head in assent. And they filled their shining vessels with water and carried them off rejoicing. Quickly they came to their father's great house and straightway told their mother according as they had heard and seen. Then she bade them go with all speed and invite the stranger to come for a measureless hire.

As hinds or heifers in spring time, when sated with pasture, bound about a meadow, so they, holding up the folds of their lovely garments, darted down the hollow path, and their hair like a crocus flower streamed about their shoulders. And they found the good goddess near the wayside where they had left her before, and led her to the house of their dear father. And she walked behind, distressed in her dear heart, with her head veiled and wearing a dark cloak which waved about the slender feet of the goddess.

184-211 Soon they came to the house of heaven-nurtured Celeus and went through the portico to where their queenly mother sat by a pillar of the close-fitted roof, holding her son, a tender scion, in her bosom. And the girls ran to her. But the goddess walked to the threshold: and her head reached the roof and she filled the doorway with a heavenly radiance. Then awe and reverence and pale fear took hold of Metaneira, and she rose up from her couch before Demeter, and bade her be seated. But Demeter, bringer of seasons and giver of perfect gifts, would not sit upon the bright couch, but stayed silent with lovely eyes cast down until careful Iambe placed a jointed seat for her and threw over it a silvery fleece. Then she sat down and held her veil in her hands before her face. A long time she sat upon the stool<sup>2</sup> without speaking because of her sorrow, and greeted no one by word or by sign, but rested, never smiling, and tasting neither food nor drink, because she pined with longing for her deep-bosomed daughter, until careful Iambe—who pleased her moods in aftertime also—moved the holy lady with many a quip and jest to smile and laugh and cheer her heart. Then Metaneira filled a cup with sweet wine and offered it to her; but she refused it, for she said it was not lawful for her to drink red wine, but bade them mix meal and water with soft mint and give her to drink. And Metaneira mixed the draught and gave it to the goddess as she bade. So the great queen Deo received it to observe the sacrament....<sup>3</sup>

(LACUNA)

212-23 And of them all, well-girded Metaneira first began to speak: "Hail, lady! For I think you are not meanly but nobly born; truly dignity and grace are

conspicuous upon your eyes as in the eyes of kings that deal justice. Yet we mortals bear perforce what the gods send us, though we be grieved; for a yoke is set upon our necks. But now, since you are come here, you shall have what I can bestow: and nurse me this child whom the gods gave me in my old age and beyond my hope, a son much prayed for. If you should bring him up until he reach the full measure of youth, any one of womankind that sees you will straightway envy you, so great reward would I give for his upbringing."

Then rich-haired Demeter answered her: "And 224-30 to you, also, lady, all hail, and may the gods give you good! Gladly will I take the boy to my breast, as you bid me, and will nurse him. Never, I ween, through any heedlessness of his nurse shall witchcraft hurt him nor yet the Undercutter:<sup>4</sup> for I know a charm far stronger than the Woodcutter, and I know an excellent safeguard against woeful witchcraft."

When she had so spoken, she took the child in 231-47 her fragrant bosom with her divine hands: and his mother was glad in her heart. So the goddess nursed in the palace Demophoön, wise Celeus' goodly son whom well-girded Metaneira bare. And the child grew like some immortal being, not fed with food nor nourished at the breast: for by day rich-crowned Demeter would anoint him with ambrosia as if he were the offspring of a god and breathe sweetly upon him as she held him in her bosom. But at night she would hide him like a brand in the heard of the fire, unknown to his dear parents. And it wrought great wonder in these that he grew beyond his age; for he was like the gods face to face. And she would have made him deathless and unageing, had not well-girded Metaneira in her heedlessness kept watch by night from her sweet-smelling chamber and spied. But she wailed and smote her two hips, because she feared for her son and was greatly distraught in her heart; so she lamented and uttered winged words:

"Demophoön, my son, the strange woman buries you deep in fire and works grief and bitter sorrow for me."

Thus she spoke, mourning. And the bright 250-5 goddess, lovely-crowned Demeter, heard her, and was wroth with her. So with her divine hands she snatched from the fire the dear son whom Meta-

<sup>2</sup> Demeter chooses the lowlier seat, supposedly as being more suitable to her assumed condition, but really because in her sorrow she refuses all comforts.

<sup>3</sup> An act of communion—the drinking of the potion here described—was one of the most important pieces of ritual in the Eleusinian mysteries, as commemorating the sorrows of the goddess.

<sup>4</sup> Undercutter and Woodcutter are probably popular names (after the style of Hesiod's 'Boneless One') for the worm thought to be the cause of teething and toothache.

neira had born unhoped-for in the palace, and cast him from her to the ground; for she was terribly angry in her heart. Forthwith she said to well-girded Metaneira:

256-74

"Witless are you mortals and dull to foresee your lot, whether of good or evil, that comes upon you. For now in your heedlessness you have wrought folly past healing; for—be witness the oath of the gods, the relentless water of Styx—I would have made your dear son deathless and unaging all his days and would have bestowed on him everlasting honour, but now he can in no way escape death and the fates. Yet shall unfailing honour always rest upon him, because he lay upon my knees and slept in my arms. But, as the years move round and when he is in his prime, the sons of the Eleusinians shall ever wage war and dread strife with one another continually. Lo! I am that Demeter who has share of honour and is the greatest help and cause of joy to the undying gods and mortal men. But now, let all the people build me a great temple and an altar below it and beneath the city and its sheer wall upon a rising hillock above Callchorus. And I myself will teach my rites, that hereafter you may reverently perform them and so win the favour of my heart."

275-81

When she had so said, the goddess changed her stature and her looks, thrusting old age away from her: beauty spread round about her and a lovely fragrance was wafted from her sweet-smelling robes, and from the divine body of the goddess a light shone afar, while golden tresses spread down over her shoulders, so that the strong house was filled with brightness as with lightning. And so she went out from the palace.

281-91

And straightway Metaneira's knees were loosed and she remained speechless for a long while and did not remember to take up her late-born son from the ground. But his sisters heard his pitiful wailing and sprang down from their well-spread beds: one of them took up the child in her arms and laid him in her bosom, while another revived the fire, and a third rushed with soft feet to bring their mother from her fragrant chamber. And they gathered about the struggling child and washed him, embracing him lovingly; but he was not comforted, because nurses and handmaids much less skilful were holding him now.

292-300

All night long they sought to appease the glorious goddess, quaking with fear. But, as soon as dawn began to show, they told powerful Celeus all things without fail, as the lovely-crowned goddess Demeter charged them. So Celeus called the countless people to an assembly and bade them

make a goodly temple for rich-haired Demeter and an altar upon the rising hillock. And they obeyed him right speedily and harkened to his voice, doing as he commanded. As for the child, he grew like an immortal being.

Now when they had finished building and had drawn back from their toil, they went every man to his house. But golden-haired Demeter sat there apart from all the blessed gods and stayed, wasting with yearning for her deep-bosomed daughter. Then she caused a most dreadful and cruel year for mankind over the all-nourishing earth: the ground would not make the seed sprout, for rich-crowned Demeter kept it hid. In the fields the oxen drew many a curved plough in vain, and much white barley was cast upon the land without avail. So she would have destroyed the whole race of man with cruel famine and have robbed them who dwell on Olympus of their glorious right of gifts and sacrifices, had not Zeus perceived and marked this in his heart. First he sent golden-winged Iris to call rich-haired Demeter, lovely in form. So he commanded. And she obeyed the dark-clouded Son of Cronos, and sped with swift feet across the space between. She came to the stronghold of fragrant Eleusis, and there finding dark-cloaked Demeter in her temple, spake to her and uttered winged words:

301-20

"Demeter, father Zeus, whose wisdom is everlasting, calls you to come join the tribes of the eternal gods: come therefore, and let not the message I bring from Zeus pass unobeyed."

321-3

Thus said Iris imploring her. But Demeter's heart was not moved. Then again the father sent forth all the blessed and eternal gods besides: and they came, one after the other, and kept calling her and offering many very beautiful gifts and whatever right she might be pleased to choose among the deathless gods. Yet no one was able to persuade her mind and will, so wrath was she in her heart; but she stubbornly rejected all their words: for she vowed that she would never set foot on fragrant Olympus nor let fruit spring out of the ground, until she beheld with her eyes her own fair-faced daughter.

324-33

Now when all-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer heard this, he sent the Slayer of Argus whose wand is of gold to Erebus, so that having won over Hades with soft words, he might lead forth chaste Persephone to the light from the misty gloom to join the gods, and that her mother might see her with her eyes and cease from her anger. And Hermes obeyed, and leaving the house of Olympus, straightway sprang down with speed to the hidden places of the earth. And he found the lord Hades in

334-46

his house seated upon a couch, and his shy mate with him, much reluctant, because she yearned for her mother. But she was afar off, brooding on her fell design because of the deeds of the blessed gods. And the strong Slayer of Argus drew near and said:

347-56 "Dark-haired Hades, ruler over the departed, father Zeus bids me bring noble Persephone forth from Erebus unto the gods, that her mother may see her with her eyes and cease from her dread anger with the immortals; for now she plans an awful deed, to destroy the weakly tribes of earthborn men by keeping seed hidden beneath the earth, and so she makes an end of the honours of the undying gods. For she keeps fearful anger and does not consort with the gods, but sits aloof in her fragrant temple, dwelling in the rocky hold of Eleusis."

357-9 So he said. And Aidoneus, ruler over the dead, smiled grimly and obeyed the behest of Zeus the king. For he straightway urged wise Persephone, saying:

360-9 "Go now, Persephone, to your dark-robed mother, go, and feel kindly in your heart towards me: be not so exceedingly cast down; for I shall be no unfitting husband for you among the deathless gods, that am own brother to father Zeus. And while you are here, you shall rule all that lives and moves and shall have the greatest rights among the deathless gods: those who defraud you and do not appease your power with offerings, reverently performing rites and paying fit gifts, shall be punished for evermore."

370-83 When he said this, wise Persephone was filled with joy and hastily sprang up for gladness. But he on his part secretly gave her sweet pomegranate seed to eat, taking care for himself that she might not remain continually with grave, dark-robed Demeter. Then Aidoneus the Ruler of Many openly got ready his deathless horses beneath the golden chariot. And she mounted on the chariot, and the strong Slayer of Argos took reins and whip in his dear hands and drove forth from the hall, the horses speeding readily. Swiftly they traversed their long course, and neither the sea nor river-waters nor grassy glens nor mountain-peaks checked the career of the immortal horses, but they clove the deep air above them as they went. And Hermes brought them to the place where rich-crowned Demeter was staying and checked them before her fragrant temple.

384-404 And when Demeter saw them, she rushed forth as does a Maenad down some thick-wooded mountain, while Persephone on the other side, when she saw her mother's sweet eyes, left the chariot and horses, and leaped down to run to her, and falling

upon her neck, embraced her. But while Demeter was still holding her dear child in her arms, her heart suddenly misgave her for some snare, so that she feared greatly and ceased fondling her daughter and asked of her at once: "My child, tell me, surely you have not tasted any food while you were below? Speak out and hide nothing, but let us both know. For if you have not, you shall come back from loathly Hades and live with me and your father, the dark-clouded Son of Cronos and be honoured by all the deathless gods; but if you have tasted food, you must go back again beneath the secret places of the earth, there to dwell a third part of the seasons every year: yet for the two parts you shall be with me and the other deathless gods. But when the earth shall bloom with the fragrant flowers of spring in every kind, then from the realm of darkness and gloom thou shalt come up once more to be a wonder for gods and mortal men. And now tell me how he rapt you away to the realm of darkness and gloom, and by what trick did the strong Host of Many beguile you?"

Then beautiful Persephone answered her thus: 405-33 "Mother, I will tell you all without error. When luck-bringing Hermes came, swift messenger from my father the Son of Cronos and the other Sons of Heaven, bidding me come back from Erebus that you might see me with your eyes and so cease from your anger and fearful wrath against the gods, I sprang up at once for joy; but he secretly put in my mouth sweet food, a pomegranate seed, and forced me to taste against my will. Also I will tell how he rapt me away by the deep plan of my father the Son of Cronos and carried me off beneath the depths of the earth, and will relate the whole matter as you ask. All we were playing in a lovely meadow, Leucippe<sup>5</sup> and Phaeno and Electra and Ianthe, Melitta also and Iache with Rhodea and Callirhoe and Melobosis and Tyche and Ocyrhoe, fair as a flower, Chryseis, Ianeira, Acaste and Admete and Rhodope and Pluto and charming Calypso; Styx too was there and Urania and lovely Galaxaura with Pallas who rouses battles and Artemis delighting in arrows: we were playing and gathering sweet flowers in our hands, soft crocuses mingled with irises and hyacinths, and rose-blooms and lilies, marvellous to see, and the narcissus which the wide earth caused to grow yellow as a crocus. That I plucked in my joy; but the earth parted beneath, and there the strong

<sup>5</sup> The list of names is taken—with five additions—from Hesiod, "Theogony" 349 ff.: for their general significance see note on that passage.

lord, the Host of Many, sprang forth and in his golden chariot he bore me away, all unwilling, beneath the earth: then I cried with a shrill cry. All this is true, sore though it grieves me to tell the tale."

434-7 So did they turn, with hearts at one, greatly cheer each the other's soul and spirit with many an embrace: their heart had relief from their griefs while each took and gave back joyousness.

438-40 Then bright-coiffed Hecate came near to them, and often did she embrace the daughter of holy Demeter: and from that time the lady Hecate was minister and companion to Persephone.

441-59 And all-seeing Zeus sent a messenger to them, rich-haired Rhea, to bring dark-cloaked Demeter to join the families of the gods: and he promised to give her what right she should choose among the deathless gods and agreed that her daughter should go down for the third part of the circling year to darkness and gloom, but for the two parts should live with her mother and the other deathless gods. Thus he commanded. And the goddess did not disobey the message of Zeus; swiftly she rushed down from the peaks of Olympus and came to the plain of Rharus, rich, fertile corn-land once, but then in nowise fruitful, for it lay idle and utterly leafless, because the white grains was hidden by design of trim-ankled Demeter. But afterwards, as springtime waxed, it was soon to be waving with long ears of corn, and its rich furrows to be loaded with grain upon the ground, while others would already be bound in sheaves. There first she landed from the fruitless upper air: and glad were the goddesses to see each other and cheered in heart. Then bright-coiffed Rhea said to Demeter:

460-9 "Come, my daughter; for far-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer calls you to join the families of the gods, and has promised to give you what rights you please among the deathless gods, and has agreed that for a third part of the circling year your daughter shall go down to darkness and gloom, but for the two parts shall be with you and the other deathless gods: so has he declared it shall be and has bowed his head in token. But come, my child, obey, and be not too angry unrelentingly with the dark-clouded Son of Cronos; but rather increase forthwith for men the fruit that gives them life."

470-82 So spake Rhea. And rich-crowned Demeter did not refuse but straightway made fruit to spring up from the rich lands, so that the whole wide earth was laden with leaves and flowers. Then she went, and to the kings who deal justice, Triptolemus and Diocles, the horse-driver, and to doughty Eumolpus and Celeus, leader of the people, she showed the

conduct of her rites and taught them all her mysteries, to Triptolemus and Polyxeinus and Diocles also,—awful mysteries which no one may in any way transgress or pry into or utter, for deep awe of the gods checks the voice. Happy is he among men upon earth who has seen these mysteries; but he who is uninitiate and who has no part in them, never has lot of like good things once he is dead, down in the darkness and gloom.

But when the bright goddess had taught them all, they went to Olympus to the gathering of the other gods. And there they dwell beside Zeus who delights in thunder, awful and reverend goddesses. Right blessed is he among men on earth whom they freely love: soon they do send Plutus as guest to his great house, Plutus who gives wealth to mortal men.

483-9 And now, queen of the land of sweet Eleusis and sea-girt Paros and rocky Antron, lady, giver of good gifts, bringer of seasons, queen Deo, be gracious, you and your daughter all beauteous Persephone, and for my song grant me heart-cheering substance. And now I will remember you and another song also.

490-495